

Recommendation of Review Panel
for Centers of Excellence
FY 1990-91

On May 14, 1990, the panel to review EIA Centers of Excellence proposals for FY 1990-91 met in Columbia. The review panel consisted of one out-of-state consultant and one staff representative each from the Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education. The members were:

Dr. Robert Elkins, Chair
Department of Foreign Languages
West Virginia University

Dr. Dianne Worthy, Supervisor
Teacher Education Section
S.C. Department of Education

Dr. Jeffrey Bartkovich
Coordinator, Academic Programs
S.C. Commission on Higher Education

Dr. Robert Elkins served as chairperson.

In November, 1989, requests for proposals for Centers of Excellence in the priority areas of foreign language education and reading education were distributed to all eligible institutions. Only one proposal, representing a cooperative program between Furman University and the University of South Carolina-Spartanburg, was received. The proposal requested \$136,940 in FY 1990-91 to establish a Center of Excellence in Foreign Language Instruction.

Members of the Review Committee were provided copies of the proposal prior to convening on May 14. At that meeting, time was allocated to the institutions to present an overview of the proposal and to respond to questions by members of the Review Committee.

After completion of the presentations by the cooperating institutions, the Review Committee discussed the merits of the proposal and the activities of the Center. Specific attention was given to the degree to which the proposed Center met each of the following criteria specified in the Guidelines:

1. Presentation of a clearly defined focus for the Center;
2. Demonstration of institutional capacity to design and conduct basic and applied research activities;
3. Evidence that the Center's mission and activities support one or more of the host institution's existing teacher education programs;

4. Definition of the benefits to be derived by the State of South Carolina and evidence these are consistent with the purposes outlined for the Centers of Excellence Program;
5. Documentation of the potential for State, regional, and national recognition as a Center of Excellence in the planned area of emphasis;
6. Evidence that the Center's objectives and activities lend themselves to measurement and evaluation;
7. Identification by the institution of matching funds which reflect both positive commitment and the potential to sustain the Center when State support is discontinued;
8. Evidence that the Center addresses one of the priority areas designated as a critical teacher education need in the State of South Carolina by the Commission;
9. Demonstration of institutional capacity to actualize the proposed Center's goals and objectives as well as its past performance record in the planned area of emphasis.

All recommendations reached by the Review Committee were by consensus.

Review Committee Recommendation

The Review Committee commends the cooperative effort of the two institutions, one private and one public, in preparing the proposal. There was obviously a sharing of ideas and responsibilities in the development of the proposal, and a recognition of the strengths of each institution in assigning the activities of the proposed Center.

In general the proposal was well prepared and written, with strong documentation and justification for establishing a Center of Excellence focusing on foreign language education in the upstate region. The use of the guidelines on Professional Priorities in Foreign Language Instruction, promulgated by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language, as the foundation for the objectives and activities of the proposed Center provided a national framework within which to review the proposal.

The proposal focuses on definite needs in foreign language instruction and among foreign language teachers in the State. Among these needs which the proposal addresses are: 1) the need to upgrade the verbal fluency of language teachers to communicate in the target languages; 2) the need to provide opportunities for foreign language teachers who are not certified to obtain that certification; 3) the need for foreign language teachers to have the opportunity to maintain language skills and participate in professional development activities; 4) the need to incorporate advanced technology in the learning and teaching of foreign languages; and 5) the need to share

and experiment with different teaching methods and media in both pre-service and in-service programs.

The Review Committee also had some reservations concerning the proposed Center. First is the location of a Center of Excellence for foreign language teacher training at an institution, USC-Spartanburg, which does not have an approved program in foreign language teacher education. The Guidelines specify that proposals must target specific specialty areas of teacher education which the applicant institution is already authorized to offer. The designation of USC-Spartanburg as a full partner in the proposed Center is questionable.

A second concern is the lack of evidence in the proposal of commitment from and cooperation with the teacher education faculty at the respective institutions. The involvement of education faculty as well as foreign language faculty would have strengthened the proposal.

The Review Committee felt that in the activities and courses planned for the proposed Center there was an over emphasis on the content of foreign languages, that is, the learning of foreign languages, at the expense of pedagogy, that is, the teaching of foreign languages. This concern is also seen in the Committee's feeling that the proposed Center's activities focussed more on in-service teachers rather than pre-service students, especially undergraduate students in education.

Although the credentials of the participating faculty at both institutions were appropriate for many of the activities, there was not evidence of strength at the elementary school level. This raised questions about the proposed Center's ability to offer a pilot program in foreign language instruction at the elementary school level and to provide program development assistance to participating school districts.

A fifth concern was that the proposed research agenda may be too ambitious.

A final concern was that, if the Center is to be successful, it may require State funding for longer than two years. Two years may not be enough to identify and obtain external funding, or to demonstrate significant differences in either certifying teachers or improving their competencies, although certainly some of this will occur. Likewise, the agenda to increase public awareness of the need for foreign languages and to develop methods for expanding instruction in foreign languages at the elementary school level may require additional time.

The Review Committee concludes that the proposed Center of Excellence in Foreign Language Instruction would meet the Guidelines and criteria established for approval, and would recommend its approval, if the following requirements are met:

1. That the Center be designated at Furman University which has approved teacher education programs in foreign languages and which will serve as the sole fiscal agent, with appropriate recognition to USC-Spartanburg as a cooperating institution;
2. That agreements to participate in the proposed Center are provided by the deans of the schools or departments of education at both institutions;
3. That commitments from the two elementary schools which will serve as pilot sites are provided indicating their agreement to continue the project once Center of Excellence special funding is withdrawn; and
4. That the details for the pilot project at selected elementary schools be submitted to the Review Committee for review and comment prior to implementation.

The Review Committee also feels that the proposal would be strengthened if the following suggestions were accepted and incorporated into the proposal:

1. That the certified teacher for the pilot program in elementary schools not be used solely for the provision of instruction but rather be designated as a Teacher-in-Residence with the Center to provide support and direction to the Center's staff, direction and guidance to school districts and the target elementary schools, and to provide limited instruction in the elementary schools as required;
2. That the pilot program in elementary schools be implemented in a "deregulated" school;
3. That the budget and activities be modified to include a second two-year funding cycle;
4. That the methodology courses include a portion dealing with underrepresented and underserved populations;
5. That the Center evaluate the two-week immersion program to determine the appropriate length and content for the program;
6. That the Task Force to Promote Foreign Language Instruction in South Carolina include a teacher educator, and that teacher educators be included in other activities of the Center;
7. That the Center focus its research activities in one or two specified areas.