



CHE
07/12/01
Agenda item 3.02.A

**Commission on
Higher Education**

Rayburn Barton
Executive Director

July 12, 2001

MEMORANDUM

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

From: Ms. Dianne Chinnes, Chairman, Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing *DC/asm*

Consideration of CHE Service Learning Awards

At the direction of its chairman, the Commission on Higher Education has undertaken an initiative to publicize on a statewide scale the service learning and volunteerism efforts of the public colleges and universities in South Carolina. To this end, the Commission held a competition earlier this spring among the public institutions in the state with the stated outcome of recognizing in a public fashion those projects that best represent the integration of student learning with community service. Each public college and university was asked to submit one service learning project nomination, and the Commission stipulated that it would award Commendations of Excellence in Service Learning to two institutions, one in the four-year sector and one in the two-year sector. In all, 19 separate institutions submitted nominations (**Attachment 1**).

For purposes of the competition, the Commission defined service learning as college student learning at any level and in any situation that is linked in a direct, hands-on fashion to the resolution of a problem or concern in a target community outside the institution. The staff convened a selection panel, chaired by Dr. Larry Jackson, President Emeritus of Lander University and a member of the Commission. The other members of the panel were Mr. Mark Line, Associate Dean of Students at Wofford College, Mr. Steven Anastasion, Manager at Baker and Baker Real Estate Developers, and Dr. David Loope of the Commission staff.

At its meeting on May 8, 2001, the Selection Panel reviewed and discussed each of the nominations, and after numerically scoring each proposal, unanimously decided to recommend the awarding of Commendations of Excellence in Service Learning to two projects: 1) "Clemson Elementary Outdoors" from Clemson University in the four-year sector (**Attachment 2**), and

2) “Grow with Gardening” from Piedmont Technical College in the two-year sector (**Attachment 3**). The panel thought that these two projects, to the degree that they enhance student learning while simultaneously helping to solve problems or concerns in the community, were truly meritorious. Also, the panel determined that the diversity of learning experiences manifested by the Clemson and Piedmont Tech projects were of added benefit to the students involved. It should be noted, too, that there were several projects of very high caliber from each sector, a fact testifying to the many fine service learning efforts currently underway at the public colleges and universities in South Carolina.

Recommendation

The Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing recommends that the Commission approve the awarding of Commendations of Excellence in Service Learning to Clemson University for the “Clemson Elementary Outdoors” project and to Piedmont Technical College for the “Grow with Gardening” project.

cc: Attachments

CHE Service Learning Nominations

Public, Four-Year Institutions

Institution	Project
The Citadel	Practicum in Team Building
Clemson University	Clemson Elementary Outdoors
Coastal Carolina Univ.	Writing Accelerated Reader Tests
College of Charleston	Time for Tutoring
Francis Marion University	Special Olympics and Manna House Projects
Lander University	Lander Univ. Volunteers
Medical Univ. of SC	Healthy South Carolina Initiative
SC State University	Students in Free Enterprise Program
USC-Aiken	Understanding Poverty Through Service Learning
USC-Columbia	Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service
USC-Spartanburg	Students Educating Inmates
Winthrop University	Service Learning Center

Public, Two-Year Institutions

Institution	Project
Greenville Technical Coll.	After School Water Explorers Project
Midlands Technical Coll.	Children's Dental Clinic
Piedmont Technical Coll.	Grow with Gardening
USC-Salkehatchie	Meet in the Middle
Tech. Coll. of the Lowcountry	Lady's Island Elem. School Mentoring Proj.
Trident Tech. College	Brownfields Job Training Pilot, City of Charleston
York Technical College	Rolling in Rock Hill

**NOMINATION FORM
CHE SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT COMPETITION**

Institution: Clemson University

Title of project: "Clemson Elementary Outdoors"

APR 19

Director of Project: Dr. Gina McLellan

Address and Phone Number of Project Director: Department of Parks, Recreation, and
Tourism Management, 286 Lehotsky Hall, Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina,
29634-0375

Telephone 864-656-2198 **e-mail** gkmcl@clemson.edu

Establishment Date of Project: August 1999

Unit that Administers Project:
Clemson University Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management

Total Number of Students Involved: 750 Clemson University Students; 600 elementary
students from Morrison Elementary School

Signature of Institutional President:


A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'G. McLellan', is written over a horizontal line. Below the signature, the number '1' is printed.

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**PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS REGARDING THE
NOMINATED PROJECT (use the space provided or attach sheets)**

1. For purposes of this competition, the commission on Higher Education defines service learning as college student learning at any level and in any situation that is linked in a direct, hands-on fashion to the resolution of a problem or concern in a target community outside the institution. Briefly, how does your project meet the parameters of this definition? Due to the fact that many schools have access to funds to support buildings and programs, but do not include funding or provisions for the surrounding landscapes, this project is intended to address the issue of creating sustainable outdoor learning environments through a collaboration between Clemson Elementary School and Clemson University. Building on the Sustainable Universities Initiative and the schoolyard habitat program established by the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), this project involves students, teachers, and administrators. Our goal is to research, plan, design, and reflect on sustainable and efficient landscapes for Clemson Elementary School. The focus is to involve both university and K-12 school students in identifying environmental problems and using critical thinking skills to propose solutions. This could include problems associated with transportation efficiency, energy use, recycling, water use, landscape maintenance, reading, nature trails, biodiversity, etc.

One goal of this project is to reach out to a diverse population by collaborating with several institutions to design and to promote sustainable community environments for people as well as for wildlife. Another goal is to provide an opportunity for students to learn and mature through participation in a project that has a long-term visible and measurable impact. To that end, students, faculty, and administrators from collaborating schools, Clemson University, volunteers, and school board officials are working together in four phases. 1) Research, analysis, and information gathering; 2) planning and design; 3) scheduling and implementation, and 4) reflection, evaluation, sharing, and recognition.

2. Specifically, which segments of the college/university community does your project involve? Many segments are involved including multiple departments and an interdisciplinary group of faculty and classes. Examples include:

Gina McLellan's classes in Recreation and Leisure Environments researched concepts pertaining to children and outdoor environments and also interviewed children at Morrison regarding what they wanted to see in the outdoor environments at their school. Using this research as a foundation, Lolly Tai, professor and landscape architect worked with her students to design four courtyards based on favorite books picked by the children at Morrison: *The Adventures of Peter Rabbit*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Secret Garden* and the *Harry Potter* series. Clemson students researched how children learn outdoors, looked at famous children's gardens in the United States and elsewhere and listened to the Morrison Elementary children. Each courtyard will include scenes from the book, an outdoor classroom area and complementary plantings.

Horticulture students designed an inner courtyard for native plants. Their work was guided by horticulture professor and landscape architect Mary Haque, whose schoolyard habitat projects have created sustainable landscapes for schools across the state.

Civil engineering students are building two bridges across the brook in the natural area. They will use steel that has been donated for their participation in the National Student Steel Bridge Competition held by the American Society of Civil Engineers each year. "The members of the steel bridge team designed the bridges during spring semester. They will construct them in June and place them in July," says Scott Schiff, civil engineering professor and adviser to the team.

Several PRTM and English classes have written grants for community businesses to donate goods. A technical writing class taught by English professor Summer Smith is writing brochures, a guide for the nature trail and an overview of the school and grounds for the beginning of school. The class is also developing a Web site.

An important resource for the Outdoors project has been Landscapes for Learning, a University collaborative that promotes environmental stewardship and education using plants and landscapes.

Coordinated by sociology professor and Extension specialist Brenda Vander Mey, Landscapes for Learning provides opportunities for service learning and building stronger communities to more than 30 schools within the state. Other Clemson Cooperative Extension specialists have helped with the Outdoors project including the Extension-trained Master Gardeners. And volunteer groups AmeriCorps, America Reads, and the Girl and Boy Scouts of America and others have helped.

Dr. Gina McLellan in PRTM continues to coordinate this diverse array of students, faculty, and community groups.

3. How many students (please specify degree levels to the extent possible) does the project affect? More than 750 Clemson students have helped design and create outdoor learning areas for the new school with guidance from University faculty and staff, and more than 600 elementary students, parents and community members. Degree levels range from elementary students at Morrison to sophomore, junior, senior, and master's level students from Clemson University. Students from each of Clemson's academic colleges — including landscape architecture; design; civil engineering; English; horticulture; biology; and parks, recreation, and tourism management — have been engaged in the project.

4. Can you please describe the target community or communities that your project serves? Three years ago, when Morrison Elementary School found a site for a new school — to be named Clemson Elementary when it opens — faculty, parents and the children themselves became involved in planning the grounds. They envisioned the school's 36-acre campus as a wonderful living, learning environment extending beyond the structure of the new facilities. To figure out how to put their wish list into action, they called on the University. "Clemson Elementary's campus will be unlike any other elementary school campus in the United States," says Gina McLellan, professor of parks, recreation and tourism management and coordinator of the outdoor project. She's also president of the school improvement council. "Nevertheless," says McLellan, "it will serve as a state and, perhaps, national service-learning model for what can be done in partnership with a university committed to community."

The goal is to offer environments in which all types of learners can excel, especially those who need hands-on participation. Likewise, the features have been designed to coordinate with the S.C. Department of Education curriculum standards. While students, teachers, parents, and administrators are the primary target audience which this project serves, we are also partnering

with the City of Clemson to make athletic fields, outdoor classrooms, and the nature/walking trail available to the larger community on weekends and after school.

5. Can you please describe your project's effectiveness in helping to solve the problems or concerns in the target community? In service learning, both college students and the community are targeted in a mutual exchange. Clemson students from multiple courses are working towards advancing their knowledge and commitment to environmental stewardship while helping create outdoor learning environments for the larger community. The use of service learning techniques has already generated a tremendous enthusiasm for learning and doing at both schools. "It's exciting, one of the most exciting things in my career," says Paul Prichard, principal of the elementary school. "It's an opportunity of a lifetime. We want it to be a model throughout our district and the state." S.C. Educational Television will broadcast a special on the project, with video from Clemson's Communications Center. Calls have already come in from as far away as the Denver Museum of Natural History. The school's nature trail, which includes a brook that winds through 12 acres of wooded land, is already being used by students and the community although the school building itself is still under construction.

6. Can you please describe the degree to which your project enhances student learning? Students at all levels are learning and practicing oral, written, and graphic communication skills as they present their ideas to the community through conversation, speeches, booklets, flyers, posters, and landscape plans. They are learning to work in interdisciplinary teams and are developing an understanding of the planning process as they work through site analysis, research, preliminary plans, final plans, fund raising, and project implementation.

7. Is there academic credit associated with the project (not necessary for submission)? If so, please explain the particulars. Most of the college students working on this project are receiving academic credit as part of a course they are taking. For example, students in landscape architecture may learn how to do a site analysis by doing one for Clemson Elementary Outdoors for 10% of their grade. Twenty percent of a student's final grade in a horticulture class may be associated with researching native plants and drawing a native plant courtyard design for Clemson Elementary. Students have earned academic credit in technical writing, editing, Land Resource Management, Biology, and Engineering courses to name a few.

While most of the work to date has been associated with academic credit, engineering students have committed to help create features for the Alice courtyard. They will design forms for the card people and mushrooms, place them, let them cure, then set them up at the school. All of their work is voluntary, under the umbrella of the University's chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers. "We might even use some of the mixes we've used in our concrete canoe, so the material will be light," says Serji Amirkhanian, civil engineering professor and adviser to Clemson's national champion concrete canoe team. He's also been president of the Morrison PTO and a member of the school improvement council.

8. If funding is required, how is the project funded and what is the approximate annual budget for the project? Since funding for education in South Carolina is very limited at this time, most of the work to date has been done on a minimal budget with professors and students donating their time and expertise as part of their teaching and learning duties. The Clemson University Service Learning Collaborative provided a \$500. Mini-grant to get the project started. The Sustainable Universities Initiative funded \$10,000 including Morrison and several other

schools around the state, and Landscapes for Learning has also provided grant money for the project. The PTO has initiated a fundraising campaign with help from Clemson , and community agencies such as Tricounty Ace Hardware, Head/Lee Nursery, and Faffards have donated tools, plants, and potting soil. Students in Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management and technical writing classes have helped faculty prepare over twenty more grants, which have been submitted or are in review.

9. Feel free to add any other comments you may have about your project.

For a project that is intensely community-centered, Clemson Elementary Outdoors has far-reaching applications.

At the higher-education level, the impact could be enormous. Clemson's College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Life Sciences has submitted a challenge grant to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Called "Greening Schools," the grant proposes for Clemson Elementary Outdoors and other sites across the state to be national models for experiential service learning. "Clemson Elementary Outdoors is a valuable contribution to the community; it is outreach in its fullest sense," says John Kelly, the University's vice president for public service and agriculture. "This cross-college, community model is exactly what is envisioned in the concept of an 'engaged' university."

As President of Clemson University, I view Clemson Elementary Outdoors as a great example of how Clemson is setting the standard in public service for land-grant universities by engaging the whole campus in service and outreach. This fulfills our mission of world-class teaching, research and public service in the context of general education, student development and continuing education.

-----*President Jim Barker*

Please return this form by April 20, 2001, to

**Dr. David Loope
South Carolina Commission on Higher Education
1333 Main Street, Suite 200
Columbia, SC 29201**

NOMINATION FORM
CHE SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECT COMPETITION

APR 20

Institution: Piedmont Technical College

Title of Project: "Grow With Gardening"

Director of Project: Beverly Burton

**Address & Phone Number
Of Project Director** 211 Melrose Terrace
Greenwood, SC 29649 864-223-1576

Establishment Date of Project: November 2000

Unit That Administers Project: Academic Affairs (Public Service Division)

Total Number of Students Involved: 46

Signature of Institutional President:



1. For purposes of this competition, the Commission on Higher Education defines service learning as college student learning at any level and in any situation that is linked in a direct, hands-on-fashion to the resolution of a problem or concern in a target community outside the institution. Briefly, how does your project meet the parameters of this definition?

Students at a community college, university, and grammar school coordinated their efforts to bring the multiple benefits of gardening to a public institution that serves seniors, infants, and children. This multigenerational facility has recently been built and provides all the necessities, but not the many extra services that enhance the lives of citizens. Considering the social, psychological, physical, and spiritual needs of seniors and children, the idea of a "raised" gardening project was conceived. (The "raised" garden is at a height that both children and seniors can reach without excessive stretching or bending. It's also wheelchair accessible.) This project brings different ages together to have an opportunity to learn from each other and provides a stimulating outdoors activity that has become a permanent fixture of this public institution. This project also involved two additional partners from the community in landscaping and gardening. Students designed, built, and planted the garden project.

2. Specifically, which segments of the college/university community does your project involve?

This project involved a number of curriculums across several academic institutions. Piedmont Technical College had two curriculums involved. Service-Learning (Soc 240) is an elective open to all students on campus but typically attracts students majoring in Human Services. Landscaping and Design Implementation (Hrt 107) is a course offered in the Horticulture Department. Lander University's science division offers a course for non-majors, Plants and Society, which primarily attracts commercial art students, and Cambridge Academy first-graders were all educational partners in making this project a success.

3. How many students (please specify degree levels to the extent possible) does the project affect?

This project involved 14 first-graders from Cambridge Academy, 14 students from Piedmont Technical College, and 18 students from Lander University. The project also impacted the three and four-year-olds and senior adults at the institution – LifeTime Discoveries.

4. Can you please describe the target community or communities that your project serves?

LifeTime Discoveries is an intergenerational facility that primarily serves children from birth to 12 years of age and seniors over 55; however, they also serve adults of different ages, depending on particular circumstances. Clients served come from all economic and educational backgrounds.

5. Can you please describe your project's effectiveness in helping to solve the problems or concerns in the target community?

In today's society, we often segregate people by age and economics. Many children rarely get to interact on any regular basis with older adults and older adults are often isolated from children. This project has provided a permanent raised garden, which can enhance the relationship of children and older adults as they grow together in sharing this activity in nature. Older adults need the opportunity to feel productive and that they are participating in worthwhile projects. Likewise, children need to have the opportunity to learn from the wealth of information our seniors can provide. Our elders are important teachers for our future – the children.

6. Can you please describe the degree to which your project enhances student learning?

Research shows that students retain the most educational material when they apply the concepts they are learning about in the classroom to a real meaningful setting. Their learning is enhanced even more when they connect with the real world in a service activity. The students in this project had academic goals that connected with hands-on service. Students in first grade not only learned about growing plants, but could also learn about why plants are important in our society and about how raised gardens can serve people of all ages. They also have the hands-on experience of actually planting the plants they have been growing in the raised garden and knowing that they have made a significant contribution to others. The Landscape and Design class was able to take the information they heard in the classroom and actually see how their designs could be implemented. Lander University's Plants and Society class enhanced their educational experience by being able to actually work on a project that embodied the very principles they were learning in class. The service-learning class had multiple experiences interacting with the partners in a variety of ways. Their educational purpose was to learn about service and experience the true meaning of citizenship. They served as project assistants and were able to get a broader view of how a variety of people can work together to create a meaningful community project that lasts for years. They were inspired to create activities for the senior adults and children to connect them to the project as partners and begin a continuing relationship. These students created and conducted a "gardening bingo" game that was very well received and assisted the children with planting seeds.

7. Is there academic credit associated with the project (not necessary for submission)? If so, please explain the particulars.

The project director, Beverly Burton, has been working with service learning for years and was the developer of the service-learning program at Piedmont Technical College. Because she practices true service learning, "a course based, credit-bearing educational experience that allows students to (a) participate in an organized service activity that

meets identified community needs and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility" (Bringle&Hatcher, 1995. p.112). she sought out educational partners who wanted to include the service project as part of the curriculum they were teaching. The university partner included this as part of a four-hour course, the community college partners included this project in their three-hour courses, and Cambridge Academy included their participation in their science lessons. Each academic instructor decided on their academic learning and service goals and to what extent this became part of each student's success measure in the class.

8. If funding is required, how is the project funded and what is the approximate annual budget for the budget?

In 1999 Burton was chosen as one of about 90 people in the U.S. to participate in a Psychology Partnership Project held at James Madison University. She was one of ten assigned to a service-learning group at this forum. This small national group wrote a grant to allow them to apply principles and research they were investigating to small local projects. Each national partner received \$2000. This became the budget for the "Grow in Gardening" project. This project is a self-sustaining project and will no longer require funding except for the minimal cost for seeds and plants.

9. Feel free to add any other comments you may have about your project.

"Grow in Gardening" really began years before. The Kellogg Foundation funding in the form of a grant provided a way to begin studying service learning. Burton served as project director and organized faculty and agencies to discuss and develop criteria for service learning at the PTC campus. A service-learning class was developed, and instructors also began using service-learning options in a variety of classes. All of this work combined to enhance Burton's selection for participation in the National Psychology Partnership Project, where she learned more about joint service-learning partnerships. She became part of the service-learning team that wrote the grant that ultimately funded the "Grow in Gardening" project.

Having multiple partners enhances the opportunity for the exchange of many ideas. It can also provide a variety of students across different academic levels a chance to share and learn from each other. The students participating in this project became an integral part of the lesson. Their learning became real through the opportunity to apply their academic instructions. Through participation, students become engaged, not just passive bystanders. Students also had an opportunity to become connected to the community and develop a true sense of civic responsibility.

One of the things that determines the true success of a service-learning project is its ability to become self-sustaining. "Grow in Gardening" is a project that will serve many people for many years. Students did not just take on a service activity that they would have to repeat yearly. Students engaged the users of the public facility during the process so that they became empowered as the "keepers" of the garden.