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**Commission on
Higher Education**

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Executive Director

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MEMORANDUM

To: Dr. Layton McCurdy, Chair, and Members, Commission on Higher Education

From: Dr. Vermelle Johnson, Chairman, and Members, Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing *VJM*

**Informational Report on Awards for the
Improving Teacher Quality Higher Education Grants
No Child Left Behind Act 2001
(PL 107-110, Title II), Project Year 2006-07**

Background

Since 1984, the Commission on Higher Education has been responsible for administering federal funds under a Title II program of *The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*. In 2001, the federal legislation was re-authorized under *The No Child Left Behind Act*. Title II Part entitled *A Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High-Quality Teachers and Principals*, authorizes the Commission to conduct a competitive awards program. The purpose of this part of the federal legislation is to provide support to:

- increase student academic achievement through strategies such as improving teacher and principal quality and increasing the number of highly qualified teachers in the classroom and highly qualified principals and assistant principals in schools.

The Commission is authorized to provide a competitive grants program to partnerships comprised, at a minimum, of schools of education and arts and sciences from higher education institutions along with one or more high-need local education agencies (LEA; defined as school districts). Additional partners may be included as

defined by the legislation. Funds to the state are allocated based on the FY 2001 amount received under the former *Eisenhower Professional Development and Class-Size Reduction* programs. Any remaining funds from the federal appropriation are distributed through a formula based on the State's school-age population and percent of these children in families with incomes below the poverty level.

Under federal regulations, 2.5 percent of the *Improving Teacher Quality Higher Education Grants* (ITQ) funds for the state are allocated to the Commission to be used for the competitive grants program. The Commission is expected to have \$900,000 with which to make awards with Federal FY 2006-07 awards. Proposed projects may request up to \$200,000 in funds per year. Average budget requests for both continuing and new projects range from \$85,000 to \$200,000. The Commission seeks proposals that will have maximum impact and encourages multi-year programs to assure positive results on the target audience. The number of grants awarded will be determined primarily by the quality of the proposals submitted and the size of the negotiated final budgets in comparison to the total funds available. Equitable geographic distribution (i.e., districts served) must be considered in making awards, assuming proposals are deemed to be of high quality. No proposal will be considered unless it meets the minimum federal definition of a partnership (as stated in the *ITQ Guidelines and in the Federal Title II Non-Regulatory Guidance*).

A total of 10 proposals were received by the Commission for consideration. In addition, there are seven continuing projects for FY 2006-07 that are recommended for funding.

A review panel consisting of K-12 and higher education representatives met on March 8, 2006, to review and rate the proposals submitted for consideration. Members of the review panel noted that many proposals contained inadequate evaluation plans related to student achievement. The panelists also voiced concern about the lack of evidence of collaboration with the partners in the planning of the projects.

Overview of Improving Teacher Quality Higher Education Grants *Guidelines*

The higher education program is a competitive grants program with the primary focus on professional development; however, there are several significant changes under the legislation. Foremost is that the Commission will only award grants to eligible partnerships that must be comprised of, at a minimum, (1) a private or public institution of higher education and the division of the institution that prepares teachers and principals; (2) a school of arts and sciences; and (3) a high-need local education agency (defined in the legislation as a school district based upon U.S. census data). Additional partners may also be included. Another change is that there is no longer a focus on science and mathematics but that nine core academic areas (English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts,

history, and geography) can be addressed in proposals. Professional development may focus on in-service and pre-service teachers as well as principals and paraprofessionals. The emphasis of the proposed projects must be on low-performing districts and schools, and the Commission is charged with ensuring an equitable geographic distribution of grants.

The priority areas that proposals must address derive from the federal legislation as well as those identified in the State's Consolidated State Plan submitted to the U.S. Department of Education.

Review Panel Recommendations

The review panel determined that three of the 10 eligible proposals were fundable projects. The members of the review panel made recommendations for programmatic and budgetary changes for each of the ten projects. The Review Panel made several general comments regarding the quality of the proposals that the staff will use in future outreach activities with the institutions concerning the program. Many of the proposals received poor reviews because of the weak quality of the proposed partnership, evaluation plan or meeting the needs of teachers and students. Several proposals were cited as having very weak evaluation plans, which are required by the *Guidelines*. The federal legislation directly links teacher quality to student achievement, yet few of the proposals evaluated the projects' activities in relation to student achievement.

Columbia College	Making Math And Technology High-quality (MMATH)	Dr. Lynn Noble Kathy Coskrey	\$179,046
University of South Carolina	High School Teacher Inquiry and Technology Professional Development Program	Dr. Christine Lotter	\$150,000
Winthrop University	Pee Dee Leadership Academy	Dr. Jonatha Vare	\$197,690

The funding amount requested for the new awards is \$526,736. The total amount requested for all proposals submitted is \$1,680,435.50. In addition, the second and third year of funding for awards made under the FY 2004-05 and 2005-06 grant competition total \$1,064,305.36 for a total of \$1,591,041.36. Carry forward funds from FY 2004-05 (\$591,961.51) will be used for expenditures through September 1, 2006.

In addition to the three new projects, seven previously funded Improving Teacher Quality Higher Education projects will continue to function during the coming year, while five projects have concluded.

Converse College	Vertical Teaming and Curriculum	Dr. Martha	\$116,446
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Converse College	Alignment to State Standards Professional Development in Literacy	Lovett Dr. Nancy Breard	\$121,815
Francis Marion	Middle School/Higher Education Partnership in Science Education	Dr. Derek Jokisch	\$117,250
Francis Marion	Improving Teacher Quality	Dr. Tammy Pawloski	\$124,848
University of South Carolina	Increasing 2 nd & 3 rd Grade Teachers' Mathematics Knowledge Using Standards-Based Instructional Strategies and Homework Assignments	Dr. Rhonda Jeffries	\$85,055
University of South Carolina	Middle School/Higher Education Partnerships in Science Education	Dr. Jon Singer	\$124,120
USC-Aiken	Developing High Quality Middle School Mathematics Teachers	Dr. Tom Reid	\$124,771

The Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing approved at its April 6, 2006, meeting, on behalf of the Commission, the review panel's funding recommendations as depicted. The Committee was given the authority to make the awards on behalf of the Commission several years ago. This authority was granted in order to streamline the grant award-making process. In keeping with the procedure from previous years, the staff is granted authority to negotiate the final program activities and budgets with the project directors (as per the recommendations of the review panel). Funding is contingent upon the project directors' revision of the proposed project to meet the review panel's recommended changes.

This report is being presented to the Commission for information only.