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**Commission on
Higher Education**

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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/gm

**Consideration of Report on
South Carolina Research Initiative Grants, FY 1999-2000**

Background

In September 1999, the Commission held the first competition for the newly authorized South Carolina Research Initiative Grants (hereafter referred to as "SCRIG.") The *Guidelines* for the competition stated that the period of research activity for funded projects was scheduled for January 1-December 31, 2000.

The purpose of the SCRIG program is to provide small grants to faculty researchers at public institutions of higher education in South Carolina for the development of research activities with a special emphasis on research designed to lead to economic development. The program was also meant to help establish a larger number and the credibility of research faculty in South Carolina's public universities and colleges by having SCRIG funding serve as "seed money" for additional funding applications to eleemosynary, federal government, and private for-profit agencies which sponsor research grant programs. Likewise, interinstitutional cooperation was noted as a priority in the *Guidelines* for the SCRIG program.

The legislative proviso for the SCRIG competition included \$2.5 million, of which \$40,000 was set aside for administration, specifically contracting for an external professional evaluation by a panel of experts whose work was directed by the Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) office. By the terms of the legislative proviso and Commission policy, 90% of all grant funds were reserved for proposals emanating from the research institutions and 10% from the four-year public teaching universities in the state. For dividing the competitive funding by institutions, the Commission decided upon a formula which distributed funds to each of

the three research institutions in accord with the percentage of the most recent three-year average of the total number of research dollars expended by each of the three.

Although the principal period of research activity for SCRIG funded projects was January 1, 2000 through December 31, 2000, the *Guidelines* also contained a provision for an automatic extension for a six-month period through June 30, 2001, for any researcher who requested it. For SCRIG projects which received automatic extensions, final reports on the outcomes and impact of the SCRIG projects were due on July 31, 2001. In fact, all but two researchers did request and were granted the extension.

The outline for the final report, developed by the Commission's staff in communication with several institutionally-based Sponsored Programs and Research (SPAR) officials and Principal Investigators (PIs), had two required parts: 1) a narrative report on the outcomes and assessments of impact of the funded proposal; and 2) a close-out fiscal analysis showing how the funds for each project were expended and whether any funds remained at the conclusion of the project. The report was designed to be analytical, and data-rich, while remaining very short in length. In the end, the vast majority, but not all, SCRIG recipients chose to follow the suggested format for the follow-up report. The summary narrative and financial data aggregated through this effort has proved useful in understanding the outcomes of the funded SCRIG projects during the program's first year of operations.

This report on the measurable outcomes of the SCRIG-funded projects is divided into several sections, as follows:

- Number of proposals received and funded.
- Amount of funding per proposal requested and received by institution and sector.
- Funded proposals categorized by disciplinary area.
- Number and types of additional funding requested and received per proposal and by type of proposal.
- Number of projects which have created new incubator or "spin off" industry as a result of their SCRIG funding.

Proposals Received and Projects Funded for SCRIG 1999

A total of 94 proposals were received from nine public four-year institutions. Of these a total of 30 proposals were funded. Table 1 shows the number of full proposals received and the number funded by institution and sector.

Table 1
Proposals Received and Funded by Institution and Sector
for the SCRIG 1999 Competition

Institution	Proposals Received	Proposals Funded
Research Institutions		
Clemson	18	8
MUSC	21	9
USC-Columbia	41	9
Sector Subtotal	80	26
Teaching Universities		
The Citadel	1	1
College of Charleston	2	2
Coastal Carolina University	5	1
South Carolina State University	2	-
USC-Aiken	2	-
Winthrop University	2	-
Sector Subtotal	14	4

Grant Funding Requested and Received

The following table shows for those grants which were funded through SCRIG the amount of funding which had been initially requested for them and the actual amount awarded. The data is aggregated by institution and by sector.

Table 2
Amount Requested and Actual Amount Funded
For SCRIG 1999 Funded Projects
Per Institution And Per Sector

	Amount Requested	Amount Funded
Research Sector		
Clemson University	\$879,146	\$580,732
Medical University of SC	\$1,440,506	\$808,996
USC-Columbia	\$1,239,400	\$824,272
Sector Subtotal	\$3,559,052	\$2,214,000
Teaching Universities		
The Citadel	\$64,800	\$62,300
Coastal Carolina University	\$91,800	\$91,800
College of Charleston	\$91,900	\$91,900
Sector Subtotal	\$248,500	\$246,000

Summary

All the projects for the SCRIG 1999 competition were finished within 18 months, showing clearly that the “year-long and an automatic extension of six months” (allowable under the *Guidelines*) was feasible.

The legacy of the SCRIG 1999 competition is an advancement of research infrastructures in our public universities and an increased number of relationships between South Carolina’s public universities and existing (and recently incubated) private enterprise interested in cutting-edge research. The emphasis on life sciences research in this first round of SCRIG funding also suggests the possibility of increased health and environmental quality for the citizens of the state.

It is too early to be able to quantify any lasting significance that might accrue to the state from the follow-up activities for which the SCRIG funding served as a catalyst. To develop follow-up grant proposals, to get them funded, to do more extensive research, and to have that research analyzed and published—or implemented in society as a public service or in the private marketplace as a service or product—all take significant time. Therefore, revisiting this issue after a decent interval is important. A follow-up report in 2002 would be useful in this regard to chart further the accrual of gains to the state which might be related to initial SCRIG funding.

Recommendation

The Committee recommends that a follow-up report on the first round of SCRIG grants be prepared in a year to assess the further significance which SCRIG-funded projects might have had for both economic development in the state and for bringing additional grant funding to the state.