

## SC Teaching Fellows wins new award for innovation

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A scholarship program to draw South Carolina's top high school students into teaching became the first winner Wednesday of a new award recognizing effective education programs in the state.

South Carolina Teaching Fellows won the first WhatWorksSC Award for Excellence, presented by Furman University's Riley Institute and the nonprofit South Carolina Future Minds, which coordinates private support for public schools.

The program run by the state Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention and Advancement receives the \$10,000 prize from BB&T. The two other finalists receive \$1,000 each from the Riley Institute, said Courtenay Williams, institute project director.

Those two are a reading program at Clinton Elementary in Lancaster, which its principal credits for a 23-percentage point jump in students' reading scores over the last few years, and Clemson University's Reading Recovery Training Center, which trains elementary teachers to help struggling readers.

The awards ceremony featured videos of the finalists' programs before the winner was announced. Speakers included Richard Riley, former two-term governor in the '80s and U.S. secretary of state under President Bill Clinton. The award's complete title is named after him and his late wife, Tunky.

The WhatWorksSC Award, to be presented annually, is meant to recognize effective education programs in hopes they'll be copied or expanded statewide, organizers told The Associated Press last week.

In the case of Teaching Fellows, the hope is that the award will lead other colleges to offer the program on their campuses. Currently at 11 private and public colleges statewide, the program received top marks from anonymous judges in three of four categories: evaluations, maximization of resources, and sustainability, Williams said.

The Legislature launched the rigorous program in 1999 to address teacher shortfalls. It calls for up to 175 students to be chosen annually for scholarships of up to \$6,000 a year for four years, involving them in intensive training and summer activities beyond those of other education majors. Their required volunteer work has included helping build Habitat for Humanity homes near their schools.



The advertisement is a white rectangular box with a thin black border. At the top left is the SAS logo, consisting of a blue 'S' followed by 'sas' in lowercase. To its right is the tagline 'THE POWER TO KNOW.' in all caps. Below the logo and tagline, the text 'Educators and Students:' is written in a large, black, sans-serif font. Underneath this, the phrase 'FREE online curriculum resources in all the core subjects for middle and high school grades.' is written in a bold, orange, sans-serif font. A white rounded rectangular button with a thin grey border contains the text 'CLICK TO LEARN MORE' in all caps. Below the button is a collage of educational materials: a tablet displaying a science diagram of Earth's layers, a laptop showing a 'Hickory Pathways' website with a butterfly illustration, and several colorful worksheets or book covers, one of which has the title 'SYSTEMS OF LINEAR EQUATIONS'.

Each campus has its own Teaching Fellows director, who crafts its unique activities and requirements. The 11 institutions with a Teaching Fellows program are Anderson University, Charleston Southern University, College of Charleston, Columbia College, Furman University, Lander University, Newberry College, South Carolina State University, University of South Carolina's main campus in Columbia, USC Upstate, and Winthrop University.

As of June, a total of 785 fellows had graduated from the program.

To ensure South Carolina's children benefit, fellows must teach in a public school for at least as many years as they received the scholarship, or pay back the money. Legislators and educators praise the program, saying it encourages the state's brightest high school students not only to become teachers, but to stay in South Carolina.

Budget cuts have led to smaller scholarship amounts for fewer students. In 2010, 122 students were selected to receive \$5,000 a year. This year, 159 students were chosen for the scholarships, also at \$5,000 a year.

According to a report released by the center earlier this year, students in the program are more likely than other education majors to graduate and stay in the classroom. It reports that 85 percent of all loan-satisfied fellows were still teaching.

The WhatWorksSC award stems from discussions earlier this year between members of the state Board of Education, state Chamber of Commerce, Riley Institute and Future Minds.

The other semifinalists:

- Bridges to a Brighter Future, Furman University, Greenville
- Clemson-Barnwell First Steps Partnership, Barnwell County
- Focus to Develop Reading Time, Sue Cleveland Elementary School, Greenville
- Horry County Early College High School, Conway
- Language! West Ashley High School, Charleston
- Project Lead the Way, Anderson Districts 1 & 2 Career and Technology Center, Williamston
- SC TAP System: South Carolina Department of Education and National Institute for Excellence in Teaching

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