

WhatWorksSC

case study

About WhatWorksSC

In 2005 and 2006, with a grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Riley Institute at Furman conducted the largest ever study of public education in South Carolina. The study yielded key strategies for creating world-class schools in South Carolina, derived from 3000 focus group hours with more than 800 stakeholders.

WhatWorksSC ties those strategies to a number of initiatives to serve as a resource for educators, students, the community and policy makers in South Carolina. Products include case studies, which drill down on innovative initiatives from across the state; a series of expert papers that further explore the findings of the study; and an evolving clearinghouse of programs and initiatives that exemplify the study's essential key strategies for improving public schools.

Currently, Teaching Fellows are enrolled at 11 universities across South Carolina: Anderson University, Charleston Southern University, College of Charleston, Columbia College, Furman University, Lander University, Newberry College, South Carolina State University, USC Columbia, USC Upstate, and Winthrop University.

The South Carolina Teaching Fellows Program



Teaching Fellows participating in a seminar

Making career decisions is often a difficult process for young people. And too many times teaching is not a career that is considered or discussed during the decision-making process. The South Carolina Teaching Fellows Program seeks to change this reality by bringing attention to teaching as a career and by attracting more talented young people into the profession.

The South Carolina Teaching Fellows Program was created in 1999 by the state's General Assembly and is administered by the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA), located on the campus of Winthrop University. According to CERRA's web site, the mission of the program is to "recruit talented high school seniors into the teaching profession and help them develop leadership qualities."

The Teaching Fellows Program provides enrichment opportunities for up to 175 promising future teachers each year, in addition to making available to these students a forgivable loan of up to \$24,000, or up to \$6,000 per year of college. Students in the program must pursue a degree leading to a South Carolina teaching certificate. The loan is forgiven when the Teaching Fellow teaches at a South Carolina school for the duration of time that they received the loan. (If a student receives the loan for four years of college, the student must teach in South Carolina for four years to have total loan forgiveness.)

Teaching Fellows participate in advanced enrichment programs focusing on promoting multicultural awareness, developing innovation, utilizing technology, and shaping educational leadership at their home institution. They also take part in professional development opportunities and are involved with communities and businesses throughout the state. Last year, for example, many of the senior Teaching Fellows participated in a Past, Present, and Future conference. Participating students attended sessions on topics ranging from arts integration to classroom management techniques, all of which were presented by former Fellows. They also interacted with a representative from the Palmetto Priority Schools and were supplied information about teaching in these schools. Several cohorts of Teaching Fellows also attended a technology conference in Greenville where they learned strategies to effectively integrate technology at all levels.

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Working at the intersection of education research and practice in South Carolina



Serving the community and developing leadership skills are also focuses of the program. Teaching Fellows have built Habitat for Humanity homes near their institutions, traveled abroad during the summer months to teach in struggling community schools and learn about other educational systems, partnered with other organizations to collect school supplies for local children, and hosted events on campus for schools in their community.

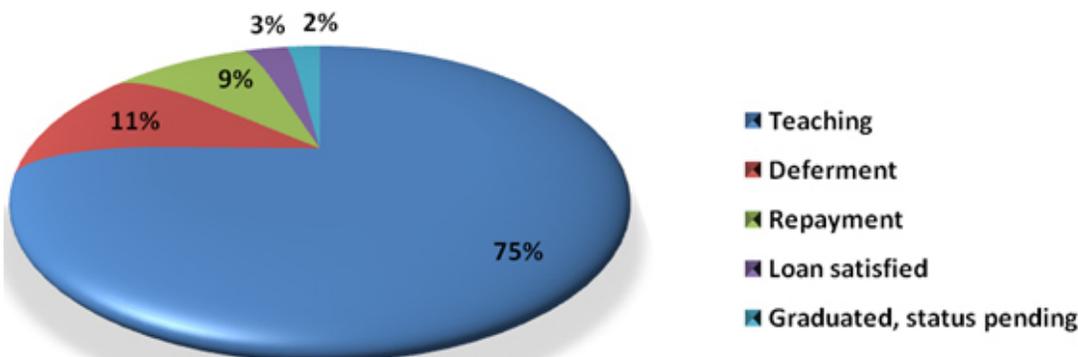
In terms of resources, the Teaching Fellows Program is currently funded at \$3.1 million. Allocations for the Teaching Fellows Program are made annually by the South Carolina General Assembly with all funds provided through the Education Improvement Act (EIA) of 1984. Each Teaching Fellows Institution is responsible for hiring a Campus Director who oversees the program at the individual college or university. CERRA Teaching Fellows staff includes a Program Director, Administrative Assistant, and Account Analyst.

Program evaluation conducted each year provides evidence that the Teaching Fellows Program is and continues to be highly effective. As of June 30, 2010, a total of 785 Teaching Fellows from the 2000-2005 cohorts had graduated from the program. Of those graduates, 591 or 75.3% were employed in a South Carolina public school district during the 2009-2010 school year. Over half of these Fellows taught in a Geographical Critical Needs School that meets one or more of the three following characteristics: an at-risk or below average absolute rating, a teacher turnover rate of 20% or higher for the past three years, and/or a poverty rate of 70% or higher.

Another 87 (11.1%) of graduating Fellows were in deferment, meaning they were in graduate school, had been granted a grace year, or had a special request approved and are still eligible to teach and receive forgiveness for this loan. Twenty-two (2.8%) of these Fellows had already satisfied their loan; 17 (2.2%) Fellows graduated in December 2009 or May 2010 and their status was yet to be determined; and 68 (8.7%) Fellows were repaying the loan through monetary means rather than service years.

In addition to the data, feedback from participants also speaks highly of the impact of the program. A Teaching Fellow at College of Charleston shared that “It’s more than a scholarship. It’s a whole program. And its fun!” According to a Columbia College Teaching Fellow: “It really sets you apart and helps you see the entire education system.”

Teaching Fellows Graduates (2000-2005 Cohorts)



“Teaching Fellows was a major part of my education at Winthrop. Going through the four years with a cohort of fellow future educators created a support system that I would definitely need when I started my teaching career. My first year of teaching was the most overwhelming experience I have ever been through. I survived with the thoughts and supportive words of fellow Teaching Fellow graduates.”

***—Sophie Hodaly
Winthrop University ‘07***

Written by :

Brooke Culclasure, Ph.D.
Research Director,
Center for Education
Policy and Leadership
The Riley Institute

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For more information on the South Carolina Teaching Fellows Program:

Jenna Hallman,
Program Director, Center
for Educator Recruitment,
Retention, and
Advancement (CERRA)
803-323-4032

hallmanj@cerra.org