

New Policy To Recognize and Reward College Faculty For Working To Improve K-12 Schools

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FORT VALLEY -- (Oct. 11) – The Board of Regents acted today to further strengthen the importance of teacher preparation programs in the University System of Georgia (USG) with the approval of a new "Work in the Schools" Policy.

The new policy will recognize and reward education and arts and science faculty in the USG who are involved in the preparation of teachers for Georgia's K-12 schools as well as faculty efforts targeted toward school improvements. The policy states that recognition will come through "decisions in promotion and tenure, pre-tenure and post-tenure review, annual review and merit pay, workload, recognition, allocation of resources and other rewards."

The regents approved the "Work in the Schools" policy after hearing a presentation by Dr. Jan Kettlewell, associate vice chancellor for P-16 Initiatives, which promote the successful progression of students from pre-school through college.

"The new policy is a top-down, bottom-up change strategy," Kettlewell said. "We are changing the policy at the board level and faculty and administrators are changing the culture at the institutional level. We are going to be national leaders in this work," she told board members. "We are going to be actively advocating for our faculty to be significantly involved in school improvement efforts, setting the tone and the expectations for our institutions."

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The policy defines teacher preparation and school-improvement efforts for USG faculty as documented involvement in:

- Improving one's own teaching so as to model effective teaching practices in courses taken by prospective teachers;
- Contributing scholarship that promotes and improves student learning and achievement in the schools and in the university; and
- Collaborating with public schools to strengthen teaching quality and to increase student learning.

The "Work in the Schools" policy owes its genesis to a \$34.6 million grant received by the USG in 2003 from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to launch the Partnership for Reform in Science and Mathematics (PRISM) in Georgia. PRISM is a comprehensive nationwide research and development project that seeks to: 1) increase achievements by students in pre-school through Grade 12 in science and mathematics in order to improve their readiness for careers in these disciplines; 2) increase the responsiveness of higher education faculty in science and mathematics to the needs of K-12 schools; and 3) close the achievement gaps among various demographic groups through partnerships at the university and P-12 level in each region of the state. PRISM research has enabled educators to confirm the validity of what had been a basic assumption – that college-level faculty play an important role in strengthening teaching quality and increasing student learning in public schools.

Kettlewell explained that PRISM has been employing a number of strategies to increase student achievement in science and mathematics, including conducting a seminar for college-level faculty to show them how to teach future teachers to help students do better in introductory science courses. The lessons learned in implementing these strategies are then used to influence statewide change in policy and practice.

Through PRISM, researchers been exploring whether teaching in the public schools gets better if there is increased collaboration with higher education and whether student achievement in science and mathematics increases if there is increased collaboration with higher education.

"We have growing evidence that tells us the answer is 'yes'," Kettlewell said. For example, she noted, teachers in Georgia school districts involved in PRISM have changed how they teach in ways that increase student engagement in science and mathematics, and Georgia teachers also have increased their academic knowledge in these disciplines. Plus, students in 10 of the 15 school districts participating in PRISM partnerships with the USG increased their SAT scores in mathematics last year by more than the statewide average increase of 4 points.

Kettlewell told the regents that these positive results can be sustained beyond the five-years PRISM has been funded by the NSF grant if the amount of collaboration between higher education faculty and the public schools is significantly increased.

"Partnerships with our state colleges and universities are vitally important as we seek to attract and retain the best and brightest teachers," said State School Superintendent Kathy Cox. "This policy change will encourage more collaboration and, in the end, will benefit our students and our state."

The USG institutions that offer teacher-preparation programs will receive guidelines from the Board of Regents encouraging formal institutional recognition of faculty undertaking such activities. The guidelines will further define and provide examples of the teaching improvements and various forms of scholarship the policy seeks to reward.

The "Work in the Schools" policy was developed by a committee made up of key Board of Regents and USG administrators, and faculty members from education and the arts and sciences. The committee refined its draft policy through a series of faculty focus groups at PRISM institutions and a System-wide symposium.

Since the adoption of new teacher preparation principles in 1998, the regents have made teacher education at 19 of the System's four-year institutions a priority. In addition, potential K-12 teachers have access to teacher education programs at 13 two-year USG colleges.

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