



### ***THE BEST AND THE BRIGHTEST SHOULD BE TEACHERS: NORTH CAROLINA'S TEACHING FELLOWS PROGRAM MAKES THIS A REALITY***

In the ten years preceding 1986, the number and quality of students entering teacher education programs had declined. The North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program was created to reverse the trend. Proposed by the Public School Forum of North Carolina, the program is the most ambitious statewide recruitment program in the nation. It was created through the collaborative efforts of business, educational and political leaders in an effort to encourage outstanding high school seniors to enter the teaching profession. In its twenty-fifth year of operation, the Program is well on its way to achieving that goal. Already over 9,800 of North Carolina's brightest and most talented high school seniors have been selected as North Carolina Teaching Fellows. There were over 3,705 Teaching Fellows graduates teaching in public schools in ninety-nine of the one hundred North Carolina counties in the academic year 2009-10. The 2011 Regional Finalists for the twenty-fifth class were notified of their status by mail on January 11, 2011. The 2011 Recipients and Alternates will be notified of their status by mail on March 18, 2011.

### ***HOW DO WE ATTRACT THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST INTO TEACHING?***

Proposed by the Public School Forum of North Carolina in 1986 and funded since 1987 by the North Carolina General Assembly, the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program now provides a \$6,500 per year scholarship to outstanding high school seniors who agree to teach four years in one of North Carolina's public schools or government schools following graduation from college.

The North Carolina Teaching Fellows Commission, appointed by the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, President Pro Tempore of the Senate, Speaker of the House of Representatives and Chair of the State Board of Education, develops the policies and regulations governing the Program. The staff of the Public School Forum of North Carolina, a non-profit partnership of business, educational and political leaders from throughout North Carolina, administers the Program.

The Forum initially proposed the Fellows Program as part of *Who Will Teach Our Children*, a ten-point teacher recruitment proposal. This plan also provided for one teacher per high school to be designated as a Teacher Recruitment Officer. No longer funded, these individuals promoted the teaching profession to community groups and students in their schools. Their efforts fostered a greater sense of pride within the professional community, and teachers recruited their top students to enter teacher education. Although all of the components of the proposal were adopted by the North Carolina General Assembly, only the Teaching Fellows Program and the Teaching Fellows Commission remain in operation and fully funded.

### ***THE TEACHING FELLOWS PROFILE***

The average *scholastic profile* of Teaching Fellows of the twenty-four classes is an SAT score over 1135 and a high school grade point average of 3.7 on a weighted scale. The average SAT score of the 2010 Recipients is an 1186 and a GPA of 4.3 on a weighted scale. Approximately 25 percent of the 500 recipients are minority and 34 percent are male.

The Fellows' selection process occurs at the school district and regional levels. Selection committees are composed of educational, political, and community leaders from across the state. Over 1,200 volunteers are involved each year in identifying award recipients at the local and regional levels. Since its inception in 1986, over 45,700 students have applied for the Teaching Fellows Scholarship. It has become one of the most prestigious awards in North Carolina.

## ***HOW IS THE TEACHING FELLOWS PROGRAM RESHAPING TEACHER PREPARATION IN NORTH CAROLINA?***

The Teaching Fellows Program is currently in place at seventeen public and private institutions with teacher education programs. Each institution must design unique and specific programs for Teaching Fellows and undergo an annual review and evaluation conducted by the Commission.

Each institution must provide a full-time faculty member to serve as the Teaching Fellows Campus Director. The Campus Directors work closely with Forum staff to develop and implement programs, which further the goals established by the Teaching Fellows Commission. These Program Goals include:

- ⇒ Providing an academically and culturally enriched program that extends well beyond the regular college program.
- ⇒ Providing opportunities and experiences that encourage the development of leaders and decision-makers.
- ⇒ Providing opportunities for building an understanding of education's place in a broader social and economic context.
- ⇒ Instilling a sense of mission, service and professionalism in the Teaching Fellows.
- ⇒ Improving the image of teacher education candidates and teacher education programs.
- ⇒ Recruiting and retaining greater numbers of male and minority teacher education candidates in North Carolina.

These broad goals are designed to encourage innovative and creative approaches to teacher preparation. Participating institutions have been given much latitude to develop unique program components.

The seventeen institutions are required to be non-traditional in their approaches to program development. The Teaching Fellows Program has become a catalyst for change. Some institutions have included new course offerings in the curriculum for credit that incorporate some of the latest research and thinking about teacher preparation. Course topics such as *The At-Risk Student*, *Leadership in the Classroom*, and *Cultural Diversity in the Social Context* are preparing students to think in new ways about school structure, collegiality and parental involvement.

A sequential program beginning in the freshman year includes structured observations and tutoring as part of field experiences. Several institutions provide rich pre-student teaching experiences for Teaching Fellows in the same school until graduation. This continuity and sequence provides public school experiences that foster a greater understanding of the total school program and the school community.

Mentors, faculty sponsors, graduate assistants, faculty advisors and campus directors are involved with the total student development. Teaching Fellows are required to attend designated cultural and multicultural activities as a group with follow-up discussions and seminars.

Institutions are requested to focus on the leadership development of Teaching Fellows. Leadership qualities such as visionary thinking and risk taking, which for so long have been undervalued in teachers and missing in many educational leaders, are stressed. Students are challenged and encouraged by business and political leaders to see beyond the teacher in the classroom and to think about the connections of education to the quality of life and the economic survival of our state. Through internships, mentor relationships, seminars and other activities, students are exposed to university and community leaders who can expand their perspectives and challenge them to think differently.

## *ENRICHMENT EXPERIENCES*

**Enrichment experiences, developed and coordinated by the Public School Forum staff, are designed to enhance the campus program and give insight into the challenges facing these students when they enter the classroom.** The first enrichment program, Discovery Trip, gives the rising sophomores a first-hand look at the state. Traveling on eleven buses over 1,500 miles for six days; the Fellows see every possible area of North Carolina including schools, industry, farms, high tech, and corporate. They also have additional opportunities to attend presentations by North Carolina authors, and experience music and drama. They quickly come to realize the diversity of the state and its people and the impact of economic conditions upon schools in a locale.

The rising juniors attend an enrichment experience chosen from a list of over 24 options such as a four-day Outward Bound Course, environmental education, wellness and relaxation workshops, as well as numerous opportunities for travel abroad, some including credit for study abroad. The Fellows then attend a conference that focuses on preparing teachers to respond to the needs of a diverse student population. Outstanding teachers identified by the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching, Teaching Fellow Alumni, and other professionals are invited to present workshops on a variety of related topics.

Rising Senior Fellows are required to attend an Orientation Experience in a school system. This experience is designed to give students an introduction to the school system community and an understanding of the overall operation of a school district. Fellows interact with superintendents, curriculum supervisors, personnel directors, transportation staff, clerical and custodial staff, as well as teachers and local governmental bodies. In addition, this experience offers opportunities to explore potential places of employment. Some school systems also offer paid internships following the Orientation Experience. The rising seniors come together for their last time as a cohort in a three-day conference. The Senior Conference is designed to provide meaningful experiences with translating theory into practice and to explore current education initiatives and policies. Its purpose is to strengthen the foundation for a successful induction into teaching.

A main goal of the enrichment experiences is to provide a setting that fosters a sense of *esprit de corp* and encourages the networking and support systems needed for successful induction into the teaching profession.

### *SUMMARY*

North Carolina has an exciting recruitment and retention program to ensure that its teachers are the most competent and best trained in the nation. Offering comprehensive documentation and evaluation data, this program has had major significance in the state and national reform efforts to restructure teacher education. In recent years, other states have passed legislation authorizing program initiatives modeled after the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program. Federal legislation has been filed in past congressional sessions to implement a federal model.

The Program continues to develop leaders in education as evidenced when Laura Bilbro-Berry, a graduate of the UNC-Chapel Hill Teaching Fellows Program and employed in Beaufort County, was named the North Carolina 2000-2001 Teacher of the Year. A Teaching Fellows graduate from UNC-Chapel Hill, Sally Hundley and her teammate were recognized as 2004 DisneyHAND Teacher Awards Honorees. Sally was also named the 2005-2006 West Region North Carolina Teacher of the Year. Trisha Muse, a graduate of the ASU Teaching Fellows Program and employed in Montgomery County, was named the 2007-2008 Sandhills/South Central Region Teacher of the Year. Jo Peterson Gibbs, a graduate of the UNC-Asheville Teaching Fellows Program and employed with Asheville City Schools, was named the 2008-2009 North Carolina Western Region Teacher of the Year. Matthew Bristow-Smith, a graduate of the ASU Teaching Fellows Program and employed with Edgecombe County Schools, was named the 2008-09 North Carolina North Central Region Teacher of the Year. Most recently, Callie Smith, a 1996 graduate of the UNC-Chapel Hill Teaching Fellows Program and employed with Carteret County Schools, was named the 2010-2011 North Carolina Southeast Region Teacher of the Year.

The 2004 Milken Award winners were Stephanie Lemon and Jennifer Brodeur, both ECU Teaching Fellows graduates. The 2008 Milken Award winner was Bryan Holley, an ECU Teaching Fellows graduate. Melinda Fitzgerald, a graduate of the of the UNC-Chapel Hill Teaching Fellows Program, was named one of the four finalists for the 2006 Disney American Teacher Award.

In 2009-10 there were three Teaching Fellows who were named Regional Teachers of the Year for their respective regions as follows: Northeast Region, Vann Lassiter, a graduate of North Carolina State University Teaching Fellows Program and is employed with Edenton/Chowan public schools; Piedmont-Triad/Central Region, Courtney Davis, a graduate of UNC-Chapel Hill and is employed with Randolph County Schools; Southeast Region, Jennifer Facciolini, a graduate of Meredith College Teaching Fellows Program and is employed with Sampson County Schools. On May 6, 2010, Jennifer was named the 2010-11 AT&T North Carolina Teacher of the Year.

Dawn Shephard Pope, a NCSU Teaching Fellows graduate served on the Board of Directors of the Public School Forum. She is the fourth Teaching Fellow to serve on the Forum Board. She also serves as the current Teacher Education Advisor to Governor Beverly Perdue. Jason Sinquefield, a UNC-Chapel Hill Teaching Fellows Graduate and teacher in Wake County, currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Public School Forum. Donald Barringer, a NCCU Teaching Fellows graduate served as the Teacher Education Advisor to Governor Beverly Perdue and is now the Teaching Fellows Campus Director at North Carolina Central University.

National recognition came to our state when Ron Clark, an East Carolina Teaching Fellows graduate, was named 2001 Disney National Teacher of the Year and "The Ron Clark Story," a TNT made-for-television movie, received the 2006 CW Best Television Drama Award.

More recently, national recognition came to our state when Amanda Northrup, A Teaching Fellows graduate of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, won the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching given by the President of the United States.

Catherine Hazelton, currently a teacher in Durham Public Schools, was the first NCCU Teaching Fellow alumna and the first Teaching Fellow to serve as a member of the Teaching Fellows Commission. Catherine was from the entering class of 1987. Dr. John D. Denning, a Teaching Fellows alumnus of Elon College (now Elon University) was the first Teaching Fellow to serve as chair of the Commission. Stephanie Lemon, an ECU Teaching Fellows graduate from the entering class of 1987; and Demond McKenzie, an NCSU Teaching Fellows graduate from the entering class 1991, currently serve as members of the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Commission.

It is also important to recognize that the Teaching Fellows Program has hundreds of Teaching Fellows that have obtained National Board Certification. Additionally, over one hundred Teaching Fellows are also graduates of the North Carolina Principal Fellows Program.

Much progress has been made in meeting the challenges of developing the Teaching Fellows Program, but the challenges that lie ahead may be even greater. We must be visionary as these students enter the classrooms of our state and provide the environment needed to recognize their competence and give them true professional status.