The University of North Carolina

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Action Greensboro Commits $2 Million for Pilot Project to Recruit and Retain Math Teachers for Select Guilford County High Schools

GREENSBORO – Action Greensboro—a unit of the Action Greensboro Partnership and a partnership of Triad-area foundations dedicated to bringing more and better jobs to the region—has committed $2 million over the next three years to expand a pilot project to recruit and retain highly qualified math teachers for selected Guilford County high schools. University, public school, and community leaders gathered at Smith High School today to announce the collaborative project involving the Guilford County Schools (GCS), the 16-campus University of North Carolina, and the two local UNC campuses, NC A&T State University and UNC Greensboro. The school system and participating University partners also are contributing significant financial resources and services, bringing total estimated funding for the joint effort to nearly $4 million.

Numerous studies have underscored the need for North Carolina to produce more scientists, engineers, and mathematicians in order to compete in the global, knowledge-based economy—a challenge magnified by a chronic shortage of qualified high school teachers in high-need subject areas such as math and science. A key issue is pay, since graduates in these fields typically have opportunities to earn much higher starting salaries in the private sector. The lack of adequate mentoring and professional development also makes it harder to retain these teachers.

Currently, some Guilford County high schools are experiencing annual turnover as high as 50 percent among math teachers. The goal of the joint project is to attract a full complement of qualified math teachers to eight Guilford County high schools; retain them through a combination of financial incentives, intensive mentoring, and professional development; and in turn, improve student learning and performance in math—a subject crucial to success in most technical and scientific fields. If successful, the pilot project will demonstrate the potential benefit of introducing market-based or "differential" pay in selected academic subject areas—coupled with expanded mentoring and other forms of teacher support—statewide.

In announcing the partnership and supporting grant, UNC President Erskine Bowles said, “It is now painfully clear that if America doesn’t quickly wake up and get more people better educated, we are going to be a second-rate power before we know it, and the best jobs of the future will not be in North Carolina. They will be in India, China, or Singapore. If our children and grandchildren are going to be equipped to compete in a knowledge-based global economy, we have to do more to increase the pool of qualified teachers for our classrooms and attract the best and the brightest into teaching. It is our nation’s most important profession. We have to begin again to treat it as such.”

“Because of the higher salaries and benefits offered by private industry, we know that our schools have a very serious problem retaining teachers in high-need subject areas such as math and science,” Bowles added. “We also have a responsibility to provide the ongoing mentoring and professional development teachers need to be successful. This truly is a crisis, and I believe we have to start treating it like a crisis and consider new and different solutions. Working in partnership with Guilford County Schools and Action Greensboro—we are going to attack this problem head-on here in Guilford County and identify effective ways to overcome it. If we succeed here, we hope to expand this effort throughout the state.”

Beginning this fall, GCS introduced differential pay for up to 53 qualified math teachers at six high schools previously identified by Superior Court Judge Howard Manning as under-performing: Dudley, Smith, Andrews, High Point Central, the Middle College at Bennett College, and the Middle College at NC A&T. Eligible teachers will receive market-based incentive pay of $10,000 to bring their annual salaries in line with recent math graduates employed in the private sector. These teachers will also be eligible to receive additional performance-based incentives of up to $4,000 if their students demonstrate at least 1.5 years of growth for the academic year. The Action Greensboro grant announced today will enable GCS to expand this differential pay and performance-based bonuses to two additional high schools—Eastern and Southern. In addition, the grant will also fund a number of related initiatives at all eight schools intended to improve teacher retention and the quality of math instruction.

As part of the announcement, Skip Moore, Chair of the Action Greensboro Operating Group (and president of the Weaver Foundation) said, "All of us associated with Action Greensboro are pleased that we can further our support for the Guilford County Schools. In the past five years, Action Greensboro—through the Commitment to Excellence program and its support for the Guilford Education Alliance—has focused on both recognizing the accomplishments of our schools as well as improving in areas where the schools do not measure up. Public education is one of the three major considerations companies use in locating, expanding, and remaining in a community. This program is

particularly important because it will focus on high schools with academic need. Mathematical skills, and associated reasoning skills, are endemic to further education and to the workforce. I am convinced that the involvement of the two local UNC campuses, and the direct support of the UNC General Administration, will reinforce the high school teachers' work and that we will see significant advancement in performance. We specifically want to recognize and congratulate the Guilford County Board of Education for its recognition that market demand and compensation varies among disciplines and that performance must be appropriately rewarded. It was a courageous step for them to step up to this issue and we are proud of them for doing so. All of Guilford County will benefit from this effort that brings UNC and the Guilford County Schools together to improve public education. Thank you for letting Action Greensboro be a part of this effort."

Strengthening and stabilizing the corps of math teachers at these high schools will require far more than higher pay. In addition to financial incentives, the pilot project will test the impact and effectiveness of a number of supporting initiatives and strategies, including:

- UNC recently funded an accelerated summer program at NC A&T that allowed 12 graduates who already had degrees in math, science, or engineering to achieve their teacher certification prior to the start of the 2006 school year. To date, GCS has hired seven of those graduates, three of whom are teaching math at pilot high schools.
- The NC Model Teacher Education Consortium, a component of the UNC Center for School Leadership Development, is providing a part-time recruiter to assist the Guilford County Schools in recruiting qualified math teachers and will provide tuition support for teachers needing additional coursework. The goal is to achieve a stable math faculty at these schools over the next three years.
- Through their joint Math and Science Education Network and other programs, NC A&T and UNCG will provide an intensive and rigorous professional development program for all participating math teachers during the summer of 2007, with ongoing follow-up sessions for new and continuing teachers. Participants will receive stipends of $4,000 each to cover tuition and support.
- All new math teachers in these pilot high schools will be mentored by designated faculty at NC A&T and UNCG, as well as by full-time mentors from GCS. To facilitate this crucial interaction, UNC is providing new laptop computers for all participating teachers and mentors.

- Through its iSchool, UNCG will provide students at the eight pilot schools access to college courses in math and science. Depending on the level of student readiness and interest, the courses may be taught face-to-face or online.
- Through its Principals Executive Program and in partnership with UNC-Chapel Hill's Kenan-Flagler Business School, UNC is providing an intensive management training program for principals from the 17 high schools Judge Manning identified as needing special intervention. Two Guilford County schools—Dudley and Smith—have three-person teams (principal, assistant principal, and teacher) participating. The University is seeking additional state funding to expand this training to other under-performing schools.
- As a pilot project testing the effectiveness and wider feasibility of differential pay, performance-based incentives, and varied support systems, it must be able to demonstrate results. In cooperation with other partners, UNCG will provide ongoing evaluation of the various strategies and a final evaluation of the overall effort. This evaluation will be made public.

"We are very excited about this partnership," said GCS Superintendent Terry Grier. "We have long used the concepts of experience and earned degrees to differentiate salaries in America's public schools. Like our counterparts in colleges in universities and the private sector, it is time to add market demand and performance to that list. It is partnerships like this that will help us attract and retain the best educators possible."

About the University of North Carolina

The oldest public university in the nation, the University of North Carolina enrolls some 200,000 students and includes all 16 of North Carolina's public institutions that grant baccalaureate degrees. Also under the University umbrella are the UNC Center for Public Television with its 11-station statewide broadcast network, and the NC School of Science and Mathematics, the nation's first public residential high school for gifted students.

About Action Greensboro

Action Greensboro was established in 2001 by six local foundations—the Joseph M. Bryan Foundation, Cemala Foundation, Community Foundation of Greater Greensboro, Tannenbaum-Sternberger Foundation, Toleo Foundation, and the Weaver Foundation—to work with the business community, local government, and the community at large to develop and expand the economic and community environment of Greensboro, with the result that more and better jobs would be created for

our citizens. In 2005, Action Greensboro joined with the Chamber of Commerce and the Greensboro Development Alliance to form the Greensboro Partnership. During the past five years, Action Greensboro has focused in six major areas—public education, attraction and retention of young professionals, entrepreneurism and creation of new businesses, business recruitment and retention, furthering a brand/image for Greensboro, and development of the center city area.

About Guilford County Schools

Guilford County Schools is the third-largest school district in North Carolina, serving more than 70,000 students at 115 schools. With approximately 9,700 employees, the district's mission is to graduate responsible citizens who are college/work ready. GCS is a national leader in providing specialized schools and instructional programs designed to meet the educational needs of a culturally diverse citizenship. For more information, visit the district's Web site at www.gcsnc.com.

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