Preparing HEHD Graduates to Shape South Carolina’s Future: An Initial Conversation

August 21, 2006
Purpose
Our purpose is to present a new view of preparing the students in the College of Health, Education, and Human Development (HEHD) to address the unique circumstances in South Carolina that preclude our youth from reaching their academic, social, economic and personal potential. We want our graduates to be agents of change.

This effort will require a significant cultural shift in the way the College has traditionally functioned and interacted, and delivered its educational and human services programs. This White Paper is presented to initiate conversation across HEHD units for the purpose of articulating the problem, defining the potential, and exploring the preparation of students for careers and leadership in an integrated system of human services.

The State of the State
The future of South Carolina is directly tied to the educational level of our citizenry. A greater appreciation for an educated citizenry and a concomitant increase in student development and achievement are inextricably linked to the State’s economic and social well being. However, there are unique circumstances facing the citizens of South Carolina that mandate a systemic effort at overcoming the problems and deficits facing many of its families and young people. Clearly, the well being of the State’s children is not the sole responsibility of the formal educational system but the education system must be a primary partner in this effort. Further, the educational establishment needs the support and engagement of the entire community to address and overcome the problems and circumstances that many students face in their everyday lives that impact their willingness and ability to learn. The College of Health, Education, and Human Development is uniquely structured and possesses the expertise to create an integrated academic program involving all academic units that prepares students to understand and work in such a system, thereby helping Clemson University achieve its Land-Grant mission.

Recent statistics and reports highlight the special circumstances that all concerned citizens and human service professionals face in serving many of the citizens of South Carolina. For example, the 2006 Kids Count Data Book (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2006) provides an annual assessment of the well-being of young people across all 50 states; it revealed that South Carolina’s well-being rating dropped to 47th from 45th among all states. The 10 measures of well-being included in the report were: birth weight of
babies, infant mortality rate, child death rate, teen death rate, teen birth rate, teens who are high school dropouts, teens not attending school and not working, children living in families where no parent has full-time year-around employment, children in poverty and children in single parent families. In all areas, South Carolina was among the worst in the nation. These measures influence how educators and other human service professionals must approach their responsibilities.

Other social and economic factors in this State have an equally significant impact on the well being of its citizenry. The per capita income in South Carolina is 43rd among all states at $26,132. The number of persons below poverty level is 12th highest among all 50 states and the number of children below poverty level is 13th highest. The 2003 unemployment statistics listed South Carolina as 5th highest among all states. Nearly 24% of the State’s adults have less than a high school education and the State is ranked 42nd and 40th respectively for adults with bachelor’s and master’s degrees (SC Budget & Control Board, 2005).

In the area of public education, South Carolina is 27th in expenditures per student. Also, the State’s student-teacher ratio is 32nd nationally and the average teacher’s salary is 29 nationally (NEA, 2005). Further, the most recent reports on student achievement from the National Assessment of Educational Progress indicate that South Carolina is making advances in science, math, reading and writing performance but still remains in the lowest quartile nationally except in mathematics achievement where it is in the 2nd quartile when comparing number of students below the Basic level of achievement in 8th grade (NAEP, 2006). Also, a recent survey conducted by Education Week measuring the 2003 graduation rates of high school students found South Carolina was the lowest among the 50 states at 53%.

Clearly, the problems and deficits our youth face in South Carolina are affecting their ability to learn, develop and achieve. These unique circumstances require new and comprehensive strategies of opportunities, support and service for both families and the children in these families. A systemic effort, embracing all the resources, programs and services in a community must be brought together if we are ever to overcome these circumstances, and the public education establishment must be at the forefront of this effort but it must have equal partners from all other facets of the community.
A Need for Leadership and Change: Processes to Achieve Our Vision as a College

How can the College of Health, Education and Human Development (HEHD) prepare professionals to better address the developmental and social needs of the citizens of South Carolina? Although education, health, and leisure are different and highly complex disciplines, a common thread fundamentally binds together the various schools, departments and programs in the College of HEHD. Our core focus is on improving the human condition for the citizens of our State.

Through traditional teaching, research, and service, each College unit has made commendable steps in contributing to its discipline and bettering the human condition. Efforts continue, and much good work is in the future. Yet, for the College to achieve its vision of being an innovative force to help build healthy and well-educated communities in the state, each unit within the College can do more to identify systemic ways to work together to achieve the common vision. Issues of leadership and change surface through this vision.

Clearly, education provides the greatest access point to P-12 students and communities statewide; yet education must partner with other human services to be truly effective. Traditionally these services, including education, have functioned in a disjointed fashion; public schools have been disengaged from communities, universities from public schools, and educational institutions from other human services (Warren, 2005). Although pockets of excellence exist, integrated services and goals are not apparent across the state.

In spite of historical disconnects, the College of HEHD is in a unique position to create adaptive solutions (Heifetz, 2001) to impact how it works to improve the well-being of South Carolina’s citizens. Leadership and adaptive work involve both organizational and individual learning, where the organization and its people close the gap between what they value and stand for and the reality they face when encountering complex issues that have no easy solutions.

Adaptive work requires individuals to work in different ways, to challenge assumptions, to confront the changing nature of their work, and to arrive at innovative solutions to complex problems that may appear impossible to confront. By having health, education, and leisure under its umbrella, the College
of HEHD is positioned to bridge its work and to become a force in the State to create both academic and practitioner-based models and initiatives to improve the human condition in South Carolina.

As the College undertakes change, understanding leadership is paramount. For change to be substantive, change theory requires that we understand differences between incremental and deep change (Waters, Marzano, and McNulty, 2004). Incremental change is a type of first-order change that allows us to fine-tune our work, making no dramatic shifts from the past. This may be appropriate in some areas of the College, and those areas would need to be identified. Deep change, on the other hand, is a type of second-order change (Argyris & Schon, 1974) that would require the College to alter its organization and its components fundamentally, and require the College faculty and staff to function and think in new ways not yet dreamed.

Solutions to the complex problems we are addressing have not emerged from current ways of thinking. Failure at problem solving has not been due to lack of ability, but more likely to inappropriate approaches to problem solving (Heifretz, 2001). Leaders often use technical instead of adaptive approaches to solve complex problems. In technical approaches the knowledge has already been created, digested, and put into procedures to guide actions. Adaptive approaches are more appropriate for leaders to use when confronting complex social problems like poverty, failing schools, and racial prejudice. For these issues, no clear solution has been articulated, no unquestionable expertise can be found, and no single procedure will suffice. Adaptive work is simply more difficult.

Our vision in HEHD requires highly adaptive work approaches. Our work becomes one of learning while defining problems and implementing solutions. To do this, leadership emerges in different forms. Traditional models of hierarchical leadership would fail, since they prevent a shared culture of disciplined action and collective commitment from growing in the ranks of faculty who need to own and direct the work and the solutions. This work is messy and requires boldness, thoughtfulness, risk-tolerance, patience and commitment on the part of all members of the College. Fortunately, our organizational structure, composed of various Schools, Departments and programs, is conducive to helping us reframe our work as a College.
Our Commitment to Child, Youth, and Family Development

The College of Health, Education, and Human Development believes that children thrive and reach optimal development when they are supported by parents and families, concerned community members, caring teachers and school professionals, and other responsive human service professionals. Families play a critical role in their children’s growth and development, therefore we strive to keep parents and other caregivers integrally involved in their children’s education and development, from preschool through high school (Dryfoos, 2005). We help parents facilitate their children’s learning and overall development and be effective advocates for their children. Further, we are committed to strengthening schools and communities so they foster the learning and development of all students, parents, and families (Annenberg, 2006). Our academic programs, regardless of major or emphasis, prepare children and youth to become lifelong learners, productive workers, and responsible citizens in a diverse and pluralistic society. To this end, we educate aspiring professionals who are prepared to create and nurture strong relationships among families, schools, and communities through collaborations that involve the general citizenry, business and industry, all human service providers, parents and other interested groups and organizations. We believe these relationships will contribute to the optimal development of children, youth, and families in each community.

Characteristics of Optimal Child and Youth Development

- The most fundamental concept in healthy human development is attachment, therefore our learning and service environments foster a sense of belonging and recognize the needs for children and youth to have access to responsible, caring adults; we support the development of caring adult-student interactions that foster mentoring, counseling, and teaching relationships.

- A truly child/youth-centered environment that recognizes and supports the comprehensive—cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and creative—development of all children is expected in our learning environments. All domains of development are included in all programs and curricula, thus competent children and youth are able to demonstrate holistic life skills; and assessment and program strategies address the social, physical, and emotional needs as well as cognitive.

- Children, youth, and families are viewed from a positive perspective, therefore individual assets, strengths, and needs are determined and valued, and high standards are maintained and expected (CREDE, 2006).

- Social capital is built in all educational and service environments by assessing and then addressing the unique needs of each individual, regardless of socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, or family make-up.
• The importance of early health and education intervention is clearly recognized, especially for disadvantaged children and families, therefore we embrace the concept of early intervention programs, with an emphasis on comprehensive education and development programs for children and their parents from diverse and disadvantaged home environments.

• Positive youth development revolves around several key constructs:
  - young people are developing assets as they move toward productive adulthood;
  - young people are agents of their own development, rather than passive recipients of services;
  - young people need ongoing access to positive developmental supports, services, and opportunities as they move through childhood and adolescence; and
  - young people thrive within competent, successful families, therefore providing educational and health-related services for families is an essential part of optimal youth development.

Guiding Principles for Full Service Community Schools
Our fundamental belief is that a systemic and coordinated program of opportunities, services and programs is essential for communities in South Carolina to overcome the problems and deficiencies outlined earlier in this White Paper. Further, we recognize a need for strong leadership and change, and we understand the core characteristics necessary for optimal child and youth development. Also, we realize that the school campus and the educational system are the cornerstone for making this system work. Therefore, we seek to transform the school facilities, curricula and programs into personalized (National High School Alliance, 2005), engaging learning environments for all students, parents, community members, and stakeholders by leveraging social capital that grows from relations of trust and cooperation between and among people in a community (Warren, 2005). However, the transformation of the educational system is a task that cannot be accomplished solely by schools, but is one that can only be accomplished through communities and schools working together.

We are committed to preparing professionals to work in this type of environment who approach their responsibilities from a holistic and integrated human service delivery system. To this end, we offer the following principles to guide our work.

• We support a full service community school strategy where the school campus and programs become a multi-service center where students, parents, community members, human service professionals, and other interested persons are invited to participate in the opportunities, services and programs offered at these sites (Dryfoos, 2005).
Leadership is embraced at all levels, and nurtured and encouraged in students, teachers, parents, and community members. Leadership has multiple meanings and transcends the traditional hierarchical model to embrace a shared, relational model of leadership that includes all community members (Michael & Young, 2005).

Community involvement is evident in the contribution of a large number of stakeholders to the success of the community and the educational process. Traditions that nurture a sense of belonging are important. Flexible learning opportunities encourage re-entry and attainment of educational goals for all community members. Community members and youth of all ages are engaged in collaborative efforts leading to life-long learning (Michael & Young, 2005; The Association for Career and Technical Education, 2006).

Learning environments are personalized with respect to planning, decision-making, and relationships. Attention is invested in the developmental needs of all members of the community. Human relationships lie at the heart of all education and human service programs and create a positive service and community culture. A sense of inclusivity, equity, and global citizenship is valued through a commitment to community involvement and service (Michael & Young, 2005; National High School Alliance, 2005; The Association for Career and Technical Education, 2006).

Empowered educators and human service professionals who are themselves life-long learners seek to prepare children and youth for life-long learning, not just to pass a test. Professionals use a variety of instructional and programmatic strategies selected with students, content, and context in mind. Expanded, long-term professional development grows from individual and community needs and involves professionals in conceptualizing, planning, and implementing activities that result in positive change (National High School Alliance, 2005; The Association for Career and Technical Education, 2006).

Academic engagement of all students in meaningful learning is essential and accomplished through high standards, an integrated curriculum, research-based instruction, assessments that are congruent with instructional goals, and community support. Students learn overarching strategies for planning, organizing, completing, and reflecting on content studied. Classrooms foster cognitive collaboration in dynamic communities of learning that support learning and personal growth through social and cognitive interactions (Langer, Close, Angelis, & Preller, 2000; National High School Alliance, 2005; The Association for Career and Technical Education, 2006).
What are Possible Actions for HEHD

Our goal is the prepare all of our graduates to be agents of change. We want to provide them with the knowledge, skills, sensitivity and passion to address the circumstances that face the citizens of South Carolina. Also, we want them to possess the leadership skills they will need to overcome the many obstacles they will encounter as they navigate through their career. And, we certainly hope to instill a sense of resiliency in order that they may cope, adapt and address the everyday challenges they will face.

In order to prepare the graduates of the College to work and lead in this new integrated system of education and human services, the following activities are offered as possible approaches to create appropriate and effective learning opportunities:

• Develop cross-disciplinary seminars;
• Develop cross-disciplinary Creative Inquiry teams;
• Develop instructional materials and modules for foundational courses and/or other experiences across the College;
• Develop an HEHD course in integrated human service systems;
• Develop community partnerships involving all academic programs and units;
• Develop integrated service-learning projects and internships;
• Develop demonstration projects with local schools and agencies;
• Develop collaborative research projects and grants; and
• Dream the possibilities!!

What are Possible Outcomes to Our Benefactors and Ourselves?

For students:

• College students will develop a holistic perspective on serving children and families;
• College students will develop and integrate teaching and service strategies that fit the individual needs of the student;
• College students will view the child within the family and community context;
• College students will develop resources to connect students and families with community resources and professionals;
• College students will model caring and responsive interactions with students and develop pro-social and emotionally supportive learning and service environments;
• Children and youth will view all professionals as nurturing, caring, responsive adults who connect with their personal world;
• PreK-12 students will be motivated to come to school, to engage actively in the learning process, and to develop responsive interactions with peers; and
• Children and youth will set high standards for themselves and strive for excellence in all areas of development and achievement.

For schools:
• Schools will develop meaningful and ongoing relationships with professionals in the community that serve children and families;
• Schools will become the social hub of the community, providing comprehensive educational and social services for children and families;
• Schools will provide seamless care and education for young children, including before and after school programs;
• Schools will establish and maintain high expectations for parent involvement and student achievement; and
• Schools will reward teachers and administrators who work to maintain a responsive learning environment that values academic, health, and social outcomes for children and families.

For families:
• Families will value the school, the teachers, and community professionals and work to develop effective communication strategies with them;
• Families will set high expectations for their children and work with the school and community professionals to achieve these standards;
• Families will view the school as an integral part of their lives and will invest time in classrooms and educational activities to support their child’s learning experience; and
• Families will respect the diversity of the school and the community and work to establish and maintain a supportive social environment that is inclusive of all socioeconomic, language, and cultural groups.
For communities:

- Communities will view the school as the hub of activities that supports the educational and social development of the child;
- Communities will recognize parents as children’s first teachers and provide comprehensive services to parents to strengthen their roles as parents and teachers;
- Communities will work to develop a cohesive system of services for families that can be headquartered within the school and that meets the educational and developmental needs of the child and the family; and
- Communities will benefit by creating an environment that is conducive to holistic development of their children and youth through an integrated system of opportunities, services and support involving all education and human service professionals.

For the College:

- Become recognized for preparing outstanding graduates who make an immediate contribution to the community;
- Become recognized for its innovative preparation of professionals working in and leading integrated human services in the State;
- Provide leadership statewide and nationally in addressing the human condition from an integrated and systemic perspective;
- Be recognized for cutting edge research on strategies for effecting change and program effectiveness; and
- Promote collegiality and collaborative professional development across the College-create cross-disciplinary learning communities.
Conclusion

Our purpose was to present a new paradigm for preparing the students in HEHD to address the unique circumstances in South Carolina that preclude our youth from reaching their academic, social, economic and personal potential. Only through an empowered educational enterprise involving all resources in a community can the circumstances facing South Carolina citizens be addressed and rectified.

It is now time for all members of the College to initiate conversation, reach consensus, and develop a plan of action for this new paradigm of preparing our graduates for their essential work in helping South Carolina achieve the quality of life and economic prosperity to which it aspires.

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Dee Stegelin, Diane Riccardi, Victoria Gentry Gillis, and Larry Allen for their tremendous contributions and authorship of this initial white paper.

For more information about the College of HEHD White Paper, please go to the following Web address: http://www.hehd.clemson.edu/timeline.php. If you would like to learn more about our College, please visit our Website at http://www.hehd.clemson.edu/index.php.