FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 28, 2007

THE HIGH COST OF TEACHERS LEAVING THE CLASSROOM
The Kenan Fellows Program at the Kenan Institute for Engineering, Technology and Science at North Carolina State University Helps Retain Teachers through Partnerships with Scientists and University Faculty

A recently released study1 from the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF) found the cost of teachers leaving the classroom at over $7 billion annually. The study included the costs of recruiting, hiring, processing and training teachers at school and district levels. In addition, there are opportunity costs that are beyond measure that are lost to students when high quality teachers leave classrooms. One solution to this dilemma is the Kenan Fellows Program. This highly regarded program has a proven track record for retaining the best and brightest teachers in K-12 public school classrooms in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.2

One Proven Solution

The total hard cost of replacing North Carolina teachers leaving the profession is $1.9M annually3. Compare this figure to the investment cost of a cohort of Kenan Fellows at $900K per year and the solution is clear--the Kenan Fellows Program is a creative, cost-effective model for retaining 93% of teachers who participate in the Fellowship. This program saves North Carolina’s taxpayer’s intellectual capital and hard-core costs. If a teacher who might have otherwise left the profession stays after becoming a Fellow, the cost is recouped, and students have an experienced, inspired teacher in the classroom. The Kenan Fellows Program is one way to solve the challenge of retaining the best and the brightest teachers in our K-12 public school classrooms!

What is the Kenan Fellows Program?

The Kenan Fellows Program is an innovative model that addresses the issue of teacher retention in K-12 public schools. The goal of the program is to address teacher retention, promote teacher leadership and advance K-12 science, technology, engineering and mathematics education.


2 These data were independently collected and prepared April 2007 by Donley Educational Evaluation Consulting, Inc. and can be found at the Kenan Fellows Program website www.kenanfellows.org.

3 State estimations based on analysis done in 2003 by Richard Ingersol, Professor of Education and Sociology, University of Pennsylvania, from the National Center for Education Statistics Student and Staffing Survey and therefore include a slight margin of error.
Kenan Fellows are public school teachers selected through a competitive process to participate in a prestigious two-year fellowship…all while remaining active in the classroom.

During these two years, Kenan Fellows work in partnership with distinguished scientists, university faculty, and the NC Department of Public Instruction, developing curriculum and teaching resources that bring cutting-edge research into the hands of students. Kenan Fellows are scientists, inventors, authors and leaders in our classrooms. They bring curriculum to life!

Examples of how the Kenan Fellows Program improves the retention of teachers and helps them develop professionally include the following:

- Currently 93% of all Kenan Fellows remain in the classroom; two of the five who have left the classroom remain in the educational field in some capacity (e.g., curriculum writing for NCDPI).
- Nearly half (49%) of all Kenan Fellows have achieved National Board Certification, the highest credential possible, in their field of teaching. These teachers serve as role models in their school and may encourage other teachers to enhance their professional qualifications, which correlates to improved student achievement.
- A substantial majority (71%) of all Fellows have made presentations on their work at state and national conferences, thereby modeling leadership skills for other teachers and disseminating their work to large teacher audiences.
- More than half (57%) of Fellows have applied for and received grants that support their projects; many have received funding for more than one grant.

The Kenan Fellows Program has developed a strategic plan to expand the program across North Carolina. The initial expansion will focus on the Advantage West, Northeast, Eastern, and Southeast Economic Partnership Regions which, taken as a whole, include North Carolina’s most economically disadvantaged school districts. These regions also exhibit much higher teacher turnover rates, significant cultural upheaval through tobacco industry losses, and inadequately diverse teacher bases relative to large minority student populations.

At full capacity, the Kenan Fellows Program hopes to offer 50 new two-year internships coordinated on a bi-annual enrollment basis with a residential component for summer professional development activities. The Kenan Fellows Program expansion has already begun and the current class of Kenan Fellows represents the first bi-annual Kenan Fellows Class. The next recruitment for the Kenan Fellows Class of 2010 will initiate in the Fall of 2007. As part of the residential model, each summer Kenan Fellows from around the state will meet in Raleigh for two weeks to participate in a Summer Internship. Fellows will then return home to work with their University mentors within their respective regions and communities.

There is a high price to pay in replacing the large numbers of teachers leaving our public school classrooms in both hard cost and in the students’ loss of quality instruction. One proven way to retain the best and the brightest teachers in North Carolina classrooms is to invest in teachers to become Kenan Fellows. Indeed the Kenan Fellows program is a wise investment in our teacher, our students and our future.

For more information and to become a Kenan Fellow or mentor, please contact the Kenan Fellows Program Director, Valerie B. Brown-Schild, Ph.D. at Valerie_Brown-Schild@ncsu.edu or call 919.515.5118.