



NEWS RELEASE

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Georgia Takes Important Step to Ensure Its High-Need Schools Have Excellent STEM Teachers

Inaugural Class of Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellows to Help State Construct Strong Pipeline of Science, Math Teachers

ATLANTA, GA (June 23, 2015)—As part of the State of Georgia’s commitment to close the achievement gaps and provide all students with high-quality teachers, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation today announced the inaugural class of Georgia Teaching Fellows.

Thirty-six individuals will be part of the first cohort of the Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellowship program in the state, which will be offered at Columbus State University, Kennesaw State University, and Piedmont College during the 2015-16 session. The highly competitive program recruits both recent graduates and career changers with strong backgrounds in science, technology, engineering, and math—the STEM fields—and prepares them specifically to teach in high-need secondary schools. The prospective teachers joined with Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal at a Statehouse ceremony today.

“Our schools are our most strategic investment in the future,” said Deal. “I’m confident these educators share my belief that every child can learn and should have access to an education that prepares them for college, the workforce and beyond. The inaugural class of Georgia Teaching Fellows will gain the training necessary to serve as a lifeline for students to a high-quality education, and I’m grateful to the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation for its investment in our state’s students.”

The Fellowship focuses on preparing top-quality educators for many of Georgia’s most underserved public schools. Each Fellow receives \$30,000 to complete a specially designed, cutting-edge master’s degree program based on a year-long classroom experience. In return, Fellows commit to teach for three years in the urban and rural Georgia schools that most need strong STEM teachers. Throughout the three-year commitment, Fellows receive ongoing support and mentoring.

“The future success of our communities, our schools, and our children depends on a strong teacher workforce prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century classroom,” Woodrow Wilson Foundation President Arthur Levine said. “Through a wide range of efforts, Georgia has demonstrated its commitment to school improvement and closing achievement gaps. The Woodrow Wilson Foundation welcomes this year’s class of Fellows and is excited about working with Georgia universities and school districts to help improve teacher preparation and to ensure that every Georgia child has excellent teachers year after year.”

The Woodrow Wilson Foundation is administering the program, with in-state coordination by the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education and support from the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation. Current project funding is \$9.36 million.

The university partners, selected in a statewide review by the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, have spent the past year and a half tailoring their teacher preparation programs to meet the Fellowship's standards for intensive clinical work and rigorous related coursework. Georgia State University and Mercer University will join Columbus State, Kennesaw State, and Piedmont in offering Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellowships for the 2016-17 academic year.

All five participating universities receive \$400,000 matching grants to develop their teacher preparation programs based on standards set by the Woodrow Wilson Foundation. For each of the program's three years, the participating Georgia colleges and universities will be able to enroll 12 fellows, totaling 180 fellows over that three-year period.

The Woodrow Wilson Foundation is also partnering with a wide range of school districts across the state on this effort, including Atlanta Public Schools, Banks County School System, Bibb County School District, Chattahoochee County School District, Clarke County School District, Cobb County School District, Dodge County Schools, Franklin County Schools, Fulton County Schools, Gwinnett County Public Schools, Habersham County Schools, Hall County Schools, Houston County Schools, Marietta City Schools, Marion County School System, Monroe County Schools, Muscogee County Schools, Paulding County School District, Stephens County School System, Union County Schools, Walton County Public Schools, and White County School District.

Through the Teaching Fellowship program, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation will contribute to the University System of Georgia's initiative to produce 20,000 new teachers by 2020.

"The Georgia Partnership has long supported strategies to improve teacher effectiveness," said Georgia Partnership President Steve Dolinger. "The Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellowship will not only help improve the teacher training programs at five universities in partnership with several of their local school systems but will also produce more STEM teachers for our state. Both goals are timely for Georgia. We are proud to help coordinate these efforts over the next several years."

Georgia joins Indiana, Michigan, New Jersey, and Ohio as Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellowship states. The Georgia program brings the Woodrow Wilson Foundation's total commitment to the Fellowship to nearly \$90 million. More information on the national program can be found at: <http://woodrow.org/fellowships/ww-teaching-fellowships/>.

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About the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation

Founded in 1945, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation (www.woodrow.org) identifies and develops the nation's best minds to meet its most critical challenges. The Foundation supports its Fellows as the next generation of leaders shaping American society.

The 2015 Class of Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellows include:

Columbus State University

- Allen Clarkson
- Kelly Colburn
- Olivia Fine
- Brandon Hewitt
- Ashley Hunter
- Mark Kagika
- Autumn McMunn
- Brian Moler
- Lauren Pace
- Althea Roy
- Marcus Stevens
- Melissa Youngs

Kennesaw State University

- Shadeed Abdul-Salaam
- Laila Bacha
- Diana Dowd
- Ebert Escobar
- James Herdon
- Chashaun Matthews
- Hannah Mattson
- Yancey Mitchell
- Michael Seymour
- Cassy Smith Davidson
- Keyonna Sturdivant
- Heather Wegenhart

Piedmont College

- Jessica Brock
- Valerie Brown
- Carlin Chandler
- Leslie Dunham
- Tyler Kinner
- DaRon Martin
- Eunice Opoku-Boateng
- Brittany Ritter
- Ira Roberts
- Shelby Schuller
- Crispin Stromberg
- Damien Washington