

Foundation Hopes to Lure Top Students to Teaching

By KAREN W. ARENSON

Taking the prestigious Rhodes Scholarships as a model, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation in Princeton is creating a fellowship program that it hopes will lure top students into teaching and transform teacher education in the United States.

"Research shows that providing excellent teachers is the single most important way to improve student achievement," said Arthur E. Levine, president of the foundation, which coordinates a variety of academic fellowship programs. "But the quality of our teaching force today is not as strong as it needs to be, and our teacher preparation programs are too weak. We hope this program will produce significant improvement in both and provide models that the rest of the country will follow."

Other programs, like Teach for America and the New York City Teaching Fellows, have also tried to attract more top students to the teaching profession using approaches like recruiting at prestigious universities, and offering fellowships and training. Dr. Levine, who became president of the Woodrow Wilson foundation last year, was previously president of Teachers College, Columbia University, and has been a strong critic of teacher education in recent years.

The Woodrow Wilson program will offer about 33 national Leonore Annenberg Teaching Fellowships a year, with \$30,000 stipends, for students to attend graduate education programs at Stanford, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Virginia and the University of Washington. Applications will be available next year for enrollment in fall 2009.

A group is hoping fellowships will improve the quality of teachers in America.

Another part of the program will provide fellowships in selected states, beginning with Indiana, at universities that agree to remake their graduate education programs along certain lines.

These include closer integration between the education colleges and colleges of arts and sciences, direct oversight of the education programs by university provosts, greater collaboration between education colleges and primary and secondary schools, more experience in schools for graduate students, and three years of mentoring after the graduates start teaching.

"If they did all those things, we

would have a radically different brand of teacher education," Dr. Levine said.

In Indiana, Ball State University, Purdue University, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, and the University of Indianapolis will participate initially, with fellowships focused on math and science teachers. Each will receive 20 fellows a year, beginning in 2009.

Dr. Levine said that while he hoped the new fellowships attracted top students, he was also trying to remake teacher training by using the fellowships and foundation dollars as leverage.

"It is not a sure thing," said Mary M. Brabeck, dean of the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development at New York University. "But every dean of an education school in the country is hoping that this is successful. There is so much we need to learn about teacher preparation and how to do it well, that any movement up that flagpole is welcome."

The Annenberg Foundation, based in Pennsylvania and California, put up \$5 million for the national fellowships, and the Carnegie Corporation of New York contributed \$1 million. The Lilly Endowment Inc. is providing \$10 million for the Indiana program.

A consortium of Ohio foundations has agreed to provide financing for Ohio to start next year. Dr. Levine said he was talking to foundations and government officials around the country about financing initiatives in other states.

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To Draw Top Teachers to Troubled Schools, Foundation Will Offer \$30,000 Stipends

BY MARIA GLOD
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The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation launched a \$17 million effort yesterday to improve teacher education and steer highly qualified teachers to high-poverty and struggling schools.

The Princeton, N.J.-based foundation announced plans to award hundreds of future teachers a \$30,000 stipend, starting in 2009, to attend graduate school. In return, the fellows will agree to teach for three years at high-needs schools, including some in Virginia. Partnering universities will focus on math, science and other content areas, and provide mentoring and support for teachers when they enter the classroom.

Arthur E. Levine, foundation president and former president of Teachers College at Columbia University, has been critical of the nation's teacher preparation programs, arguing that many have watered-down curricula and low standards. He said he's hopeful the fellowship program will help strengthen teacher training, attract strong candidates to the profession and keep

them in the classrooms once they start.

"What we're really trying to do is to dignify the teaching profession and give it status," Levine said.

The first fellowships will be awarded in spring 2009, and recipients will begin working as teachers the following year. The effort will target recent graduates who have bachelor's degrees in arts and sciences as well as people pursuing teaching as a second career.

The foundation's efforts come amid a nationwide push by educators, advocacy groups and the business community to better prepare teachers, especially in math and science. The National Math and Science Initiative is giving grants to 10 colleges and universities to replicate a University of Texas at Austin program that encourages math and science majors to become teachers.

The foundation has teamed with top teaching colleges at the University of Virginia, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Washington and Stanford University for one initiative that will accept 100 fellows over three years. It also has coordinated with four universities in Indiana for at least 80 fellows a year in an initiative that foundation officials will seek to expand to other states. Several philanthropic organiza-

tions, including the Lilly Endowment, the Annenberg Foundation and the Carnegie Corp. of New York, provided funding.

The performance of high school students taught by the fellows will be tracked to gauge whether the program makes a difference.

Jamie Fasteau, director of policy development for the Alliance for Excellent Education, said the effort could provide much-needed guidance on the most effective ways to improve high schools.

"We're always looking for the best programs for high school teachers on the ground so we can filter those up to the federal level," Fasteau said.

The fellows will work closely with school districts to get classroom training during their graduate course work. At the University of Virginia, for instance, the fellows will work with Charlottesville schools.

Robert C. Pianta, dean of the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education, said the fellowship offers a strong incentive to people considering a teaching career.

"It clearly calls attention to teaching as a profession in a way that accords it some prestige," Pianta said. "What this gives us is another way to attract the best and brightest."