

SERVE Center Awarded \$37.7 Million Federal Contract

By [Dan Nonte](#), University Relations

SERVE Center at UNCG has received a five-year, \$37.7 million federal contract – the largest grant or contract in the university’s history – to conduct research on interventions that support the improvement of Southeastern schools serving pre-kindergarten through high school students.

SERVE Center, one of the nation’s 10 regional educational laboratories, provides the best available information to local and state educators and policymakers in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina and South Carolina. The 10 labs received a total of \$326 million in this round of contracts from the U.S. Department of Education.

The contract will allow SERVE Center to conduct five experimental studies on the effectiveness of an early language and literacy professional development intervention; a program to accelerate vocabulary development in kindergarten; text-based, small-group discussions in seventh grade language arts classrooms; the effectiveness of sheltered instruction in raising English language learner’s achievement in fifth-grade classrooms; and the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative.

These rigorous, in-depth studies will take three to four years to complete and have the potential to transform education not only within the region, but throughout the country.

“Our work will guide policies in districts and states by providing them with reliable, evidence-based findings and information,” said Dr. Ludwig David van Broekhuizen, executive director of SERVE Center. “Schools, districts and even states don’t have time to conduct this kind of research themselves, but desperately need the information.”

The contract also will underwrite six “fast response” projects on teacher quality, early college high schools, school readiness, middle and high school literacy, professional development for ninth-grade algebra teachers, and school leadership approaches for low-performing schools.

These projects will be completed within a year by researchers who will analyze or re-analyze existing data, develop guides, or review the evidence base on these topics.

SERVE Center staff will collaborate with leading researchers throughout the nation for these and other elements of the contract. Among these researchers are Paula Schwanenflugel of the University of Georgia, David Francis of the University of Houston, Susan Burns of George Mason University and Catherine Snow of Harvard University.

SERVE Center was formerly known as the Southeastern Regional Vision for Education. Its board of directors includes governors, chief state school officers, educators, legislators, educational researchers and private sector leaders.

“This contract is a massive investment to conduct research that will provide research-based information about important issues in education,” van Broekhuizen said. “Our research will identify effective instructional interventions and practices that have been proven to raise student achievement. This will have a resounding effect across the region and across the country.”

SERVE Center has 65 employees, most of them based in Greensboro. It also maintains one-person offices in departments of education in each of the six states. During its 16 years, SERVE Center has distributed more than a million reports, publications and policy briefs. Clients access the center’s website more than 5,000 times a day.

“I am pleased that the U.S. Department of Education has awarded the laboratory to UNCG in this highly competitive process. This enables SERVE Center to continue its splendid work in the Southeast,” said Chancellor Patricia A. Sullivan.

“SERVE Center has been existence for 16 years now, but there still remains much to be done to improve our schools in the region. I am pleased that UNCG will continue to take a leadership role in the Southeast through this effort.”

SERVE Center’s portfolio includes research and development, evaluation, dissemination, technical assistance and field services on topics ranging from homeless education and science instruction to teaching American history and formative assessment.

In North Carolina, its programs have focused on such areas as high school redesign, classroom assessment, comprehensive school reform, policy analysis, assistance to schools and districts, technology innovation, formative teacher evaluation, middle school math and reduced class size.

This latest award is the third renewal of the five-year contract. SERVE Center has been affiliated with the UNCG School of Education since its inception in 1990. It administered contracts and grants totaling approximately \$13 million for 2005 and more than \$175 million since its inception in 1990.

“I was delighted to learn that we won the competition for the Regional Educational Laboratory for the Southeast. The laboratory, which will be beginning its 16th year at UNCG, has established a strong track record in research and development activities and in providing services to schools in the region from pre-kindergarten through high school,” Provost Ed Uprichard said.

“The competition for the five-year contract was especially stiff this year, and the plan of work called for new directions in the laboratory's research. I am proud of the work done by Ludy van Broekhuizen and his team of researchers.”

