JAMES B.
HUNT, JR.

FORMER GOVERNOR,
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
May 20, 2002

Dr. Trent E. Gabert  
Chair, Executive Committee  
Brock International Prize in Education  
University of Oklahoma  
Room 266, Administration Bldg.  
1700 Asp  
Norman, OK 73072-6400

Dear Dean Gabert and Fellow Jurors:

I nominate former Governor James B. Hunt, Jr. of North Carolina for the 2003 Brock International Prize in Education.

The Brock Prize recognizes discoveries and innovations which advance the science and art of education and which promise long term benefit to humanity. Its scope is international, its time horizon is long, and its sense of the promise of education is expansive.

The Prize is no: simply about service to education, no matter how august, but about creating new understandings and inventing sharp improvements in practice with the power to ripple across local ponds and make waves of reform in broader oceans.

Governor James B. Hunt, Jr. has contributed hugely to educational practice with a series of innovations which, taken together, have effected "a radical modification of government involvement in education" that reaches far beyond his native state of North Carolina. Among the innovations he has spawned are (1) Smart Start, a public-private partnership that has mobilized support for high quality early childhood education throughout North Carolina, (2) the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, which has set clear standards for accomplished teaching, created a rigorous system of assessment to determine which teachers meet the standard, and encouraged teachers who do meet the standard to lead the elevation of the profession, (3) the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, which has stimulated improvements in teacher education programs as well as public policies that advance teaching, (4) the linked initiative to strengthen accountability and teacher quality which helped vault North Carolina to first place in educational progress over the decade of the 90s, (5) the First in America program, which seeks to maintain North Carolina’s forward progress in education by setting ten-year goals and measuring progress toward them, and (6) the Hunt Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy, which will share knowledge about these strategies with leaders in education across the nation and around the world.
Smart Start

These days, "everybody" knows that good early childhood care and education are crucial to children’s success in school -- especially to the success of poor and minority children. Nationally, the gap between African-American children and the white majority is already half its ultimate size when they enter school. Yet good early childhood education can sharply reduce the gap, with effects that last well into children's school careers.

Governor Hunt didn't invent early childhood education, but he did invent a political strategy to get Smart Start through a traditionally conservative legislature and another strategy to assure that the program would take hold in communities all across the state.

Getting a publicly-funded early childhood program funded in a fiscally conservative state with a proud emphasis on families and "family values" was challenging. Governor Hunt's strategy was complex, but perhaps the key move was to line up CEOs from several of the state's largest and best-respected corporations to testify personally on behalf of the program. As Governor Hunt later wrote, "It is a matter of saying: Who can get things done here? Who has the power and connections and personal leadership ....? The answer, at both the state level and the individual community level, is business people." To involve child advocacy and parent groups was predictable, and that certainly was done, but organizing a parade of well-known business leaders whose backgrounds spanned political boundaries and engaging them to persuade the legislature that a sound early childhood program would be good for North Carolina -- that was inventive.

So was the shape of the Smart Start program. In fact, as Governor Hunt pointed out, it really isn't a "program" at all:

What developed in my mind was a vision of a public-private partnership within each county, where we would bring together all the people who have an interest in children -- parents, educators, health professionals, employers, church people, and others -- to be in charge of their own local early childhood initiative. I consciously stayed away from the word "program" because I didn't want it to be a "government program." The money does come from the government by and large, and the state has a responsibility to make sure that there's good early childhood development. But Smart Start needs to be a locally based, community based effort.

The strong local ownership and commitment fostered by the structure of Smart Start makes it both resilient and flexible. Resilient, because in legislative districts all across the state, a broad spectrum of local people defend funding for "their own local early childhood initiative." Flexible, because the local partnerships have broad discretion to allocate state resources to address the points of greatest need in their own areas. Different partnerships fund strikingly different mixes of child care, health care, and family support. Further, to supplement funds from state and local government, individuals and
businesses have now contributed well over 75 million dollars and more than a million hours of volunteer service to Smart Start.

In 1998, Smart Start won an Innovations in American Government Award from the Ford Foundation and the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education issued its famous A Nation at Risk report, warning of a "rising tide of mediocrity" in American education. In 1985, Governor Hunt co-chaired with David Hamburg the Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, a component of the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy. In 1986, the Task Force issued A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century. The report argued that to elevate the performance of schools as well as the status of the profession, the profession had to set high standards for accomplished teaching, assess candidate teachers against the standards, and certify only those who could pass the rigorous assessment.

On the recommendation of the Task Force, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards was created in 1987. The creation of the Board, of which Governor Hunt became the first Chairman, was an act of invention. No such board, no such standards, no such assessment, nor any such creature as a National Board Certified Teacher existed up until that point. To be sure, there were similar boards in other professions, such as architecture or medicine. But that was the point -- to establish the same sort of clear and rigorous standards for teaching as existed for other respected professions.

The National Board represents a complement to government-initiated reform in education. Comprising a majority of teachers and many other educators, the Board is essentially a creature of the profession itself, and is primarily a professionally-driven mechanism for education reform. Further, much of its funding has been private, coming from such foundations and corporations as the Carnegie Corporation of New York, The Pew Charitable Trusts, the DeWitt-Wallace Reader’s Digest Fund, the Lilly Endowment, AT&T, IBM, Procter & Gamble, RJR Nabisco, State Farm Insurance, and Xerox. Yet the Board has received substantial funding from the federal government to support development of assessments in many specialties. And the existence of the Board creates a special opportunity for public-private -- or public-professional -- partnership. North Carolina, to cite only one example, pays the entire cost of the assessment process for all candidates who complete it and awards a 12% raise to those who succeed in attaining certification. Governor Hunt was instrumental on both sides of this inventive new partnership -- helping to conceive, found, and implement the Board as well as persuading the North Carolina legislature to underwrite the per-teacher cost of assessment and to reward certification.

The Board now offers certification in over 25 specialties. There are 3,660 National Board Certified Teachers in North Carolina, and 16,044 nationwide. In all, forty-eight states
offer some form of regulatory or legislative support for Board certification, including rewards to teachers as well as interstate licensure mobility. When I lost touch with him a couple of years ago, my Australian colleague Lawrence Ingvarson of Monash University was working to create a similar board down under. Speak of local ripples producing waves that cross oceans!

The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future

Not content to create a vanguard of accomplished teachers to lead the elevation of teaching quality, in 1994 Governor Hunt worked with Linda Darling-Hammond to establish the National Commission on Teaching and America’s future. Governor Hunt has served as Chairman of NCTAF since its founding. According to NCTAF, the Commission’s approach is based on three central premises:

- What teachers know and can do is the most important influence on what students learn;
- Recruiting, preparing, and retaining good teachers is the central strategy for improving our schools; and
- School reform cannot succeed without creating the conditions in which teachers can teach and teach well.

When NCTAF was created, similar statements were often made by others, but they were more flourisherites of sentiment and rhetoric than evidence-based foundations for sound policy. Yet since publication of What Matters Most: Teaching for America’s Future in 1996, more and more research has confirmed that the statements are not merely inspirational, but matters of fact.

The 1996 NCTAF report offered five major recommendations, addressing (1) setting standards for both teachers and learners, (2) reinventing teacher preparation and professional development, (3) fixing teacher recruitment and honoring the need for a “caring, qualified, and competent teacher in every classroom,” (4) rewarding teachers for knowledge and skill, and (5) restructuring schools to support successful teaching and learning. A second report, Doing What Matters Most: Investing in Quality Teaching followed in 1997. The 1997 report described what states across the country were doing to carry out the recommendations and presented some of the results.

Many beribboned committees and commissions have issued similar reports only to hang their ribbons on the wall and move on to other matters. But follow through to real implementation is one of Governor Hunt’s trademarks (more on which below). So NCTAF has gone on to help create and support partnership networks at the state and local levels in some 19 states, several major urban districts, and throughout the Southeast. Governor Hunt continues to serve as Chair of NCTAF.
Accountability and Teacher Quality in North Carolina

If it is true that Governor Hunt has made expansive contributions on the plane of innovative ideas with broad reach, it is also true that he has made major contributions on the plane of reality here in North Carolina -- contributions to real schools, real teachers, and real kids.

NCTAF called on states to set standards, upgrade teacher education, and reward teaching. Working with allies in the business community, the State Board of Education, and the General Assembly, in 1995 Governor Hunt established North Carolina’s ABCs accountability system. A “value-added” system that focuses primarily on what students in a given school actually learn from one year to the next, the system rewards teachers in schools where students make or exceed “expected growth” — that is, where students make at least a year’s worth of progress for a year’s schooling. The system has won praise from sources as diverse as Education Week, The Fordham Foundation, and the RAND Corporation. Several states have studied it closely as they created their own systems of accountability. By chance, a delegation from the state of Washington is visiting the Hunt Institute (down the hall from my office) this very day to learn about the ABCs system.

In coordination with implementation of the ABCs, Governor Hunt launched a major initiative to bring North Carolina’s teacher salaries to the national average. As Governor Hunt wrote in a reflection on his time as governor,

“... when I ran for Governor a fourth time in 1996, I promised in my campaign that we would do two things: raise standards for our teacher so that every student would have a good one, and raise teachers’ pay to the national average in the next four years. A lot of people said we couldn’t do it. Heck, we’d slipped to forty-third among the states in the salaries we paid our teachers. The media was startled by my proposal. They said, “Governor, do you know that will cost a billion dollars?” I said, “Yes I do, and good teachers are worth every penny of it.”

Here are the results of the Governor’s promise:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>NC</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>NC Rank</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996-97</td>
<td>$31,286</td>
<td>$38,611</td>
<td>43rd</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997-98</td>
<td>$33,129</td>
<td>$39,454</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998-99</td>
<td>$36,898</td>
<td>$40,582</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-00</td>
<td>$39,220</td>
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At the same time that he was strengthening accountability and raising teachers' salaries, Governor Hunt took a number of steps to improve teacher education and professional development, including a complete revamping of all education-related master's degrees offered in the University system. In a meeting of education leaders in the Governor's Mansion, the Governor was explaining those components of his program to raise teacher pay that were based on increased knowledge and skill.

"Wait a minute," said Phil Kirk, the Executive Director of the state's Chamber of Commerce whom Hunt had appointed Chair of the State Board of Education. "I'm not convinced that getting a master's degree will necessarily make a teacher better. I was a teacher, myself, and a pretty good one, and I never had a master's degree."

University Vice President Charles Coble, who served on the jury for the Brock Prize last year, thought to himself, "I wonder how the Governor is going to deal with this one!"

Without missing a beat, Governor Hunt said, "But those are the old master's degrees, Phil. We're going to create a whole set of new advanced master's degrees, aren't we, Charlie?"

"Yessir, that's right, Governor," Coble said earnestly.

"Well, okay then," Kirk agreed.

It was Coble who told me this story. "That was the first I'd heard about any new master's degrees, and I honestly think that the Governor made them up on the spot," Coble allowed. If the Brock Prize is about inventiveness to improve education, surely there is a role for inventiveness in a flash under the pressure of necessity.

In fact, a serious reinvention of the master's degrees in the University was carried out. By a date certain set through agreement with the Governor, all education-related master's degrees were set to expire. They were completely abolished. To be eligible to offer any master's degree to teachers, each school of education had to submit an entirely new proposal with requirements that did indeed constitute an "advance" over the previously existing degrees. At about the same time, undergraduate teacher education programs were also strengthened.

Thus, to make the NCTAF reforms a reality in North Carolina, Governor Hunt mobilized the support of the business community with a commitment to strengthen accountability, the education profession with a commitment to raise teacher salaries and prestige, and teacher preparation programs with an opportunity to revamp undergraduate and master's programs (an opportunity they could not refuse).
The First in America Initiative

On February 1, 1999, Governor Hunt devoted his final biennial State of the State Address to education. That is, the entire address dealt with education. All of it.

The Governor announced that during the 1990s, North Carolina had been first in the nation in educational progress. As evidence for this claim, he noted the following:

- The National Education Goals Panel singled out North Carolina as the state showing the most significant improvement during the '90s. The state’s performance improved on 14 of the panel’s measures -- more than any other state.
- Between 1990 and 1996, North Carolina and Texas led all states in combined gains in mathematics and reading achievement on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. African-American, Hispanic, and white students all made “significant and sustained gains.”
- Over the decade, North Carolina’s SAT scores rose by 45 points.
- Both Education Week and the Fordham Foundation ranked North Carolina’s system of standards and assessments among the top five in the nation.
- Education Week noted that no other state has done more to put meaningful accountability measures in place and to improve teacher quality.
- North Carolina had more National Board Certified Teachers than any other state in the country.
- Smart Start, Governor Hunt’s program to improve early childhood education, had helped reduce the number of babies born with health problems and increase the number of children with immunizations.
- Since 1993, the rate of school violence had dropped by 21%, and the number of guns brought to school, by 68%.
- North Carolina received the 1999 Distinguished Performance Award from the National Alliance for Business for creating an education and workforce development system “that ensures that students and workers are ready for the 21st century.”

But Governor Hunt was not satisfied. He had concluded that “...if North Carolina can lead the nation in education progress, we can lead the nation in education, period. Let’s commit ourselves to this audacious goal. By the year 2010, North Carolina will build the best system of public schools of any state in America. By the end of the first decade of the 21st century, we will be the first in education.”

Over the next year, the Governor worked closely with his Education Cabinet to hammer out a set of five broad goals and more specific priorities for improvement. To give the effort still greater specificity, he asked my unit -- the NC Education Research Council -- to identify data-based indicators of progress toward the goal of making North Carolina First in America in education. We assembled data from a variety of national and state sources, supplemented them with data from our own commissioned surveys of parents,
teachers, and principals, and published the first annual First in America Report in December of 2000. Under separate cover, I have sent copies of that report for review by my fellow jurors. I think the report offers a useful overview of education in North Carolina, the status of which represents one of Governor Hunt’s legacies to the state.

The First in America initiative is yet another of Governor Hunt’s inventions. The notion of creating an indicator system to track progress toward goals is not itself new. In fact, such systems are in broad use in business and industry and in many government agencies. But to my knowledge, no system of comparable breadth, detail, objectivity, and accessibility is in place to track education progress in any other state. We certainly were unable to find one when we began designing the First in America report for North Carolina. But the initiative had another dimension of inventiveness, as well. Though some of us liked to joke that Hunt was North Carolina’s Governor for Life -- he served a total of 16 years, longer than any other Governor in our history -- he knew very well that when he left office, there was a real danger that others in the state would conclude that enough had been done for education and that it was time to turn to other urgent priorities. In my view, the First in America initiative was designed to keep the focus on education, in part by re-setting to bar to heights not previously dared by any Southern state, and in part by assuring that annually for the next decade, the state would have to face itself in the mirror of the best available data.

The Hunt Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy

Upon leaving office, Governor Hunt was faced with many attractive possibilities, not least of which must have been quiet retirement to his beef cattle farm in eastern North Carolina. Another was a run for the US Senate to succeed the redoubtable Jesse Helms, who had defeated Hunt in an earlier hotly contested race.

But Governor Hunt’s race was not yet run. Nor was another political race, he judged, the best way he could continue to contribute to education. Instead, he has concentrated on creation of a new Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy.

As a description of the Institute notes,

... there is nowhere one can turn for both comprehensive information on critical educator policy issues and the political strategies that have led to effective policy implementation. The Hunt Institute aims to become the source in this country for this kind of information, training and assistance, as well as hands-on guidance ... [for] effective public education policy at the state and district level.

The Institute is based at The University of North Carolina system offices and located physically among a set of education professional development programs which Governor Hunt either created or championed. It will work with leaders and emerging leaders nationally and internationally to share what the Governor and his colleagues have already learned about effective education reform, as well as to identify additional workable ideas
to improve public education. Among those served by the Institute will be governors and future governors, legislators and future legislators, top state and local education officials and other educators, members of the media, corporate leaders interested in the improvement of education, and key officials from other countries facing their own challenges in education reform.

The Board of the Institute is still being formed, but already comprises an impressive array of leaders from the political, corporate, media, and education worlds, including Eli Broad, President of the Broad Foundation; John Engler, Governor of Michigan and Chairman of the National Governors' Association; Kati Haycock, Director of The Education Trust; Robert Ingram, CEO of GlaxoSmithKline; Barbara Kelley, Chair of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards; Paul Patton, Governor of Kentucky; William Raspberry, columnist with The Washington Post; Diane Ravitch, Research Professor of Education at New York University and Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution; Ted Sanders, President of the Education Commission of the States; Tom Vander Ark, Executive Director of Education at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; and Bob Wehling, former Senior Vice President, Procter & Gamble. Governor Hunt will chair the Board.

Recently, Judith A. Rizzo, Deputy Chancellor for Instruction of the New York City Public Schools, has been hired as the first Director of the Institute. Atlantic Philanthropies has awarded a large, multi-year grant to launch institute activities. The Atlantic Philanthropies grant comes on top of earlier wards from the Gates Foundation and the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation. So it is off to a good start, in terms of governance, leadership, and funding as well as in Governor Hunt's overall conception.

Conclusion

In sum, then, Governor Hunt has "discovered" or invented a number of innovative policies and entities that have already resulted in "the radical modification of government involvement in education" in North Carolina and elsewhere around the country -- often by reaching across boundaries between the government and the education profession, education and business, education and media, K-12 and early childhood education, state government and local communities, education unions and business leaders, universities and schools, one state and another, and any number of other boundaries.

But once again, he is not content. Not content just to let the word get around about the policies and approaches he has pioneered, Governor Hunt has organized an Institute specifically designed to ensure that what he has learned will have a broader national and international impact. It will have its impact appropriately enough, through education about education. But because Governor Hunt knows first-hand that even well-laid plans often go astray, the Institute will also provide continuing on-site assistance and troubleshooting -- the sort of follow through that I have emphasized earlier in this letter.
Governor Hunt recalls, "My mother was a teacher, a marvelous teacher. She taught English. She loved literature, and she loved to teach. So early in my life I saw what successful teaching was and how all students learned from it, because I saw my mother do it." That was in eastern North Carolina, not far from where Governor Hunt lives now. But from 1964-1966, he and his family lived in Katmandu, Nepal, where he served as a Ford Foundation Economic Advisor to His Majesty’s Government. He has also served on the Commission on US-Japan Relations for the 21st Century. Working with the Asia Society, he co-chairs the National Commission on Asia in the Schools.

This is a man whose ideas have indeed made more than ripples in local North Carolina ponds, but whose perspective is global. His contributions not only have “the potential to provide long-term benefit to all humanity through change and improvement in education.” He is now taking bold steps to make sure that they do, creating a wave of reform that travels around the world. I hope therefore that you will agree that he is abundantly worthy of the Brock International Prize in Education.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Charles L. Thompson
Director, NC Education Research Council
JAMES B. HUNT JR.

Jim Hunt is a nationally recognized leader in education and has led his state through twenty years of dramatic economic change. Serving a historic fourth term as Governor, he has been at the forefront of education reform in his state and in the nation. The Rand Corporation reports that North Carolina public schools improved test scores more than any other state in the 1990s. Governor Hunt wants them to be first in America by 2010.

He has particularly focused on early childhood development and improving the quality of teaching in America. His Smart Start program is a nonprofit, public-private partnership rooted in each of the state’s one hundred counties providing quality child care, health care, and family support for each child who needs it. It is funded primarily by the state but is also supported heavily by private corporations and individuals. Smart Start has been visited and studied by early childhood leaders from all fifty states and many foreign countries. It received the prestigious Innovations in American Government Award from the Ford Foundation and the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

Governor Hunt has devoted much of the last fifteen years of his life to excellence in teaching in the United States. In 1985 he co-chaired with David Hamburg the “Committee of 50” which led to the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy and eventually, to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. He served in that capacity for ten years, developing standards for what accomplished teachers in America need to know and be able to do and assessments to “board certify” them. Governor Hunt also serves as the chairman of the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future at Stanford University. Its report in 1996, What Matters Most: Teaching for America’s Future, is stimulating major changes in teacher education programs and public policies that advance teaching. Governor Hunt also serves on the Board of Trustees of the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

A strong supporter of high standards in public schools, Governor Hunt has served as chairman of the National Education Goals Panel and vice chairman of the board of Achieve, Inc. He has put into place in North Carolina one of the nation’s most rigorous approaches to measuring student performance, requiring mastery of promotion and graduation and providing assistance to turn around failing schools.

His state’s economic gains from educational improvement have been impressive. North Carolina has regularly led the nation in new job creation per capita and in foreign investment. He has focused on new technologies by establishing the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics, the Microelectronics Center of North Carolina, and the North Carolina Biotechnology Center. In higher education, he serves as chairman of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education located in San Jose, California.
His work has been recognized with numerous national awards:

- The Education Commission of the States “James B. Conant Award”
- The Horace Mann League’s “Friend of Education Award”
- The Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Prize in Education
- The National Mentoring Partnership “Award for Public Leadership”
- The Children’s Defense Fund Award
- The Columbia University Teachers College Medal for Distinguished Service
- The Women Executives in State Government’s “Breaking the Glass Ceiling Award”
- The American Academy of Pediatrics “Child Health Advocate Award”
- The National Secondary Schools “Distinguished Service Award”
- The National State Boards of Education “Policy Leader of the Year Award”
- The Council of Chief State School Officers “Distinguished Service Award”
- The National Education Association “Friend of Education Award”
- The National 4-H “Outstanding Alumnus Award”
- The National Wildlife Federation’s “Conservation Achievement Award”
- The Honor Award from the Soil Conservation Society of America
- The National Religious Heritage Award

Governor Hunt holds B.A. and M.S. degrees from North Carolina State University and a J.D. degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

He and his family lived in Katmandu, Nepal, from 1964-1966 where he served as a Ford Foundation Economic Advisor to His Majesty’s Government. He has served on the Commission on US-Japan Relations for the 21st century and working with the Asia Society, co-chairs the National Commission on Asia in the Schools.

Governor Hunt and his wife, Carolyn, live on their beef cattle farm in eastern North Carolina. They have four children and eight grandchildren.
"If North Carolina can lead the nation in education progress, we can lead the nation in education PERIOD."

Governor James E. Hunt Jr., January 30, 1999

NC SCHOOLS FIRST IN AMERICA 2010

A Goal for North Carolina's Schools

2000 PROGRESS REPORT