



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Robert F. McDonnell  
Governor

April 27, 2010

Secretary Arne Duncan  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan,

The cornerstone of my administration will be preparing Virginia's students for the high-demand and high-income jobs of the 21st century, vital to bringing new jobs and opportunities to the Commonwealth. At a time when science and technology fields are among the fastest growing sectors of the economy, with some of the highest average salaries, the need to ensure exposure to these career opportunities is vital for Virginia's students.

The Virginia Initiative for Science Teaching and Achievement (VISTA) is designed to do just that: provide a community of support for sustained, intensive science teacher professional development in Virginia. Teacher goals are to have all middle and high school teachers licensed to teach science and elementary teachers able to teach inquiry-based science. The time table and teacher professional development chart of deliverables for this goal are included in this proposal.

This innovation in science education is the result of a consortium of some of the nation's finest schools: George Mason University, Fairfax; Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond; University of Virginia, Charlottesville; The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg; and James Madison University, Harrisonburg. The consortium has worked with the Virginia Department of Education to coordinate school districts for enrollment in this partnership for best practices.

VISTA will also be working with the private sector and the philanthropic community to document best practices that can be shared.

We know the winners in the economic competition of the future will be those who possess knowledge and basic skills in the STEM disciplines. VISTA is another example of an innovative partnership between the Virginia post-secondary institutions and secondary and elementary, plus the business.

Thank you for your consideration of the enclosed proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert F. McDonnell".

Robert F. McDonnell

cc: Dr. Alan Merten, President, George Mason University