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### For Embargoed Release

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### **BROWARD COUNTY TEACHER TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT PROGRAM WINS GOVERNMENT INNOVATIONS AWARD**

#### **URBAN ACADEMIES EDUCATION INITIATIVE EARNS \$100K PRIZE**

WASHINGTON, DC— For its comprehensive solution to severe teacher shortages, and for improving the quality of education for all students in this urban Florida district, the Broward County Urban Academies program has won an Innovations in American Government Award. The Award, which carries a prize of \$100,000, is sponsored by the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and is administered in partnership with the Council for Excellence in Government.

A significant challenge facing urban school districts nationwide is teacher retention. Up to 50% of teachers leave urban school districts within three years of being hired. Six years ago, Broward County schools decided to tackle their teacher retention problem with an ambitious program to target and prepare students within the school system for careers in education, and to train and mentor teachers for excellence.

The innovation behind the Urban Academies' 'Grow Your Own Teachers' program is how it involves people and institutions at every level of public education in Broward County: high school students interested in teaching careers go through a special curriculum and field training that earn them college credits and prepare them for college level training; undergraduates in one of four cooperating colleges receive rigorous course- and classroom- training in education; practicing teachers go through professional development and preparation for mentoring their incoming junior colleagues.

"Everybody in Broward's education community benefits from this program," said Robert Parks, a member of the School Board of Broward County. "Students at all levels benefit from superior teaching practices, of course, and hundreds of young people who would not have otherwise attended college will get debt-free degrees," he said. And as Stephen Goldsmith, Director of the Innovations in American Government Award at Harvard's Ash Institute, noted, the program "creates a continuity and real sense of community among educators in Broward County" because four higher education institutions band together to provide high school students with college opportunities and then connect those students to teaching Broward's students from Kindergarten on up." The Ash Institute's Director, Gowher Rizvi, calls the Urban Academies "the kind of big picture problem-solving that public education needs."

One measure of the program's success is its rapid growth. The Urban Academies has already placed 360 teachers in hard-to-staff schools, and 91% of those teachers have remained in their positions for more than three years compared to a national average of 67%. The current 271 high school students enrolled in the training program is up more than 400% from the first year in 2000; 100% of them have continued on to college, and 92% of those are first-generation college-goers.

According to Michaelle Valbrun-Pope, Principal at Broward's North Side Elementary School, these kinds of numbers add up to a new era for her school. "In 1999, Northside got a 'D' grade from the state, but for 2005-06, we received a 'B', and we're aiming for an 'A' next year," said Valbrun-Pope. "And qualitatively, our teachers are thriving. They are motivated and they feel supported and now we are getting applications from more good teachers than we've ever received in the past."

Urban Academies is one of seven programs receiving this year's Innovations in American Government Awards. Each winner takes a unique approach to meeting community needs and achieving real results. Because each of these programs is a model for government's capacity to do good, and do it well, the \$100,000 prize specifically supports dissemination to other jurisdictions.

The Innovations in American Government Awards honor city, county, state, tribal and federal government initiatives that are truly creative, measurably effective, meet a significant need, and have the potential to be transferred to other jurisdictions. The 2006 award winners, selected from an initial pool of 1,000 applicants, include two federal, two state, one county, and two municipal programs. The efforts improve conservation, healthcare, housing, education, social services, and law enforcement. The winners will be formally announced this evening at dinner event in Washington, DC.

**The Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation** ([www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu](http://www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu)) at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government fosters excellence in government around the world in order to generate and strengthen democracy. Through its awards program, research, publications, curriculum support, and global network, the Institute champions critical milestones in creative and effective governance and democratic practice.

**The Council for Excellence in Government** ([www.excelgov.org](http://www.excelgov.org)) is a national, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization whose mission is to improve government performance by strengthening results-oriented management and creative leadership in the public sector, and to build understanding by focusing public discussion on government's role and responsibilities.

The Urban Academies' May 25, 2006 presentation to the National Selection Committee, chaired by David Gergen, at Harvard's Kennedy School can be seen at the Ash Institute's website: <http://www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu/Ash/news.htm>. For more information on the Innovations in American Government program and this year's winners, visit [www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu](http://www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu) or [www.excelgov.org](http://www.excelgov.org).