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Chapman Faculty Selected to Participate in SENCER Summer Institute

ORANGE, Calif., Sept. 1, 2004 A team of four faculty members from Chapman University was selected to participate in a five-day residential summer institute at Santa Clara University in California sponsored by the National Center for Science and Civic Engagement and the National Science Foundation.

The four faculty members are: Donna Cucunato, associate professor of physical education, Dr. Connie Shears, assistant professor of psychology, Dr. Lilian Were, assistant professor of physical sciences and Dr. Virginia Carson, professor of biological sciences.

The team from Chapman University joins 31 other teams, along with representatives of 56 colleges and universities, as the newest members of SENCER (Science Education for New Civic Engagements and Responsibilities), a national dissemination project funded by the National Science Foundation.

By participating in the SENCER Summer Institute, Chapman University is contributing to a national reform effort that connects the improvement of undergraduate science education to some of the most vexing civic challenges our nation and our future graduates will face. At the Institute, the Chapman team developed courses that teach rigorous science content through problems that require scientific knowledge and expertise. The Chapman team is working on courses that focus on various areas from fundamentals of science to the pharmacology and physiology of chemical dependency. Throughout the year the Chapman team will continue to network with other faculty and engage with innovative pedagogies, assessment, and undergraduate research.

Chapman University is committed to offering a cutting edge, innovative and challenging sciences curriculum, said Dr. Ham Shirvani, Provost and Executive Vice President of Chapman University. We are thrilled to have been able to participate in this institute. The opportunity to work and confer with scientists and teams from numerous institutions is invaluable.

David Burns, director of the National Center for Science and Civic Engagement and principal investigator for the SENCER initiative, expressed his appreciation for the leadership that Chapman is bringing to this national effort to improve science education. So many of our most significant civic challenges requires knowledge of science and mathematics, Burns said. We are pleased to be partnered with Chapman University in focusing the intelligence and capacity of students, faculty, and academic leaders on some of the hardest problems of our time.

The five-year SENCER Project is designed to promote reform through faculty development, a focus on local systemic change, and improved assessment strategies. The project has three main goals: 1) to improve science education, especially for students who may never major in a scientific field; 2) to connect science education reform to more robust and relevant general education programs; and 3) to stimulate informed civic engagement with scientific questions on

the part of today's students.

Led by David Burns and Karen Oates, SENCER was founded while they were affiliated with the Association of American Colleges and Universities. Since its inception, SENCER has worked with more than 600 faculty members at more than 125 colleges and universities in 40 states and six foreign nations to improve science learning.