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**For Immediate Release**

**Sage awarded second phase of \$7.7 million grant to promote democracy**

Troy and Albany, NY – The U.S. Department of Education has awarded The Sage Colleges a \$3 million grant to fund Phase II of Civics Mosaic, a teacher-exchange program established to promote a better understanding of democracy. Phase I involved teachers in the United States and Russia. Phase II – called Civics Mosaic: Political Issues Facing Our World – will take the Russian program to a higher level of involvement and expand the program to include five Eurasian countries from Bulgaria to Mongolia. Phase II also will result in the production of a companion book for the high school textbook, “Exploring Political Ideas,” developed during Phase I.

Both Sage grants are designed to improve civic education and the understanding and practice of democracy in American, Russian and Eurasian classrooms, said Stephen L. Schechter, Sage professor of political science. Schechter, Sage’s Council for Citizenship Education director, administers the grant and has worked with international education exchange programs for more than 40 years. (Schechter traveled to Iraq at the behest of the American Federation of Teachers and the U.S. State Department in 2004 in the early stages of American occupation to work on the reform of that country’s educational system.)

Civics Mosaic aims to improve both teachers’ and students’ core civic content knowledge and skills, while at the same time creating and sustaining relationships between partnering countries, Schechter said. It’s part of the United State’s larger foreign policy program to promote democracy. The approach to learning is two-pronged: Young people learn about the great ideals – justice, democracy, rule of law – that have been fought over for centuries. They’re also given opportunities to apply those ideals to practical real-world issues of interest to them.

In addition to the teacher exchanges, and training opportunities for civics teachers who remain in their countries, Civic Mosaic engages students directly in civics through Project Citizen. Students identify a public issue of interest to them, do background research on the issue, identify alternatives for dealing with the issue, weigh the pros and cons of those alternatives, select and defend a recommendation, and develop – and implement – an action plan.

“The program serves as a tool for middle and high school teachers who want their students to connect civic knowledge and civic engagement,” Schechter said. “The larger purpose of Civics Mosaic is to teach American and foreign students to learn how to think and act civically and to address the issues of their own communities and beyond.”

The National Assessment of Education Progress’ 2006 Civics Report Card found only a slight improvement in American students’ knowledge of civics over the previous decade’s report. The

U.S Congress is currently considering spending more to make greater gains over the next decade, particularly for American students.

“Dr. Schechter’s work has had an impact on civic education locally, regionally and internationally,” says Sage President Jeanne Neff. “The Civics Mosaic program has influenced hundreds of thousands of teachers and students, and this grant will allow the work to continue in a region that’s important for a variety of reasons, including its proximity to the Middle East and China.”

The first phase of the exchange program – Civics Mosaic: Political Ideas That Have Shaped History – ends Sept. 30, 2007 and was funded with a \$4.7 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Phase II begins Oct. 1, 2007. Both build upon and expand the work of an established and successful worldwide civic education exchange program called Civitas. Started in 1995 and administered by the California-based Center for Civic Education with U.S. Department of Education funds, and U.S. Department of State support, Civitas brings U.S. organizations together to work with countries in Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa, the middle East, and Asia to advance the education of and promote the use of democracy.

Sage’s Council for Citizenship Education, together with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), was assigned to work with the Russian Federation. Through Civitas/Russia, the Council and the AFT have partnered with the Russian Association for Civic Education, Uchitelskaya Gazeta (Teacher’s Newspaper of Russia), and Grazdhanin (The Citizenship Teacher Training Center). These organizations are also partners in the Civics Mosaic program.

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### **About The Sage Colleges**

The Sage Colleges is an independent private institution of higher education, categorized nationally as a comprehensive university (Master’s II), and comprises three colleges: Russell Sage College, a comprehensive, undergraduate college for women in Troy, N.Y.; Sage College of Albany, a co-educational undergraduate college of applied studies in Albany, N.Y.; and Sage Graduate School, operating on both campuses and offering master’s and doctoral degrees. Through Sage College of Albany’s Sage After Work program, adults with substantial college credits or an associate degree can complete their bachelor’s degree while working and balancing family life.

The Council for Citizenship Education was established in 1990 at Russell Sage College as a legacy project of the New York State Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution. The purpose of the Council is to equip citizens of New York State and elsewhere with the knowledge and skills for thoughtful and effective participation in the public life of their local community, state, nation, and international system in the 21st century.