

ADDRESSING THE PREPARATION OF TEACHERS FOR PK-12 CLASSROOMS THROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGES

A Survey of Texas Community Colleges and Universities

BACKGROUND

Working in collaboration with partners in Texas, Nevada, and Illinois, the Education Commission of the States (ECS) is examining public policies that shape teacher preparation efforts. The ECS received a PT3 grant from the U.S. Department of Education to undertake this work. In Texas, ECS has partnered with the Texas Association of Community Colleges (TACC) to accomplish targeted changes that will ultimately result in a significant increase in the quantity and diversity of PK-12 teachers, particularly technology-trained teachers.

The project administered by ECS has three specific goals:

- Goal 1: Support improvement of public policy frameworks in Illinois, Nevada, and Texas by assisting these states in overcoming barriers in policy and practice that impede the ability of community colleges to participate in the recruitment, lower-division education and professional training of diverse groups of new teachers for hard –to-staff schools.
- Goal 2: Support data-based decision-making and teacher preparation reform efforts nationwide around the role of community colleges in supporting the recruitment, education and training of teachers trained to use technology, by developing and making available to state policymakers new tools, research and analysis that identifies barriers to reform, promising practices and comparative data.
- Goal 3: Engage state policymakers, education leaders and the public in a national policy dialogue regarding appropriate roles for community colleges in supporting the preparation of teachers trained to use technology through a communications outreach strategy and a series of national and regional policy forums.

The initial phase of the project was designed to audit the challenges and accomplishments in each of the states. To that end, a task force was created in the fall of 2001 by TACC to provide input to the project. The task force recommended that a survey of community colleges and universities in Texas be undertaken to determine their efforts to cooperate in preparing future teachers for Texas schools. The purpose of the survey was twofold: identify policy barriers to creating different and timely approaches to prepare teachers

and identify promising practices which could be used as a foundation for policy change or dissemination to others.

SUMMARY

In the past, teachers have been prepared for Texas public schools primarily by universities. In part because of changes to the administrative rules adopted by the State Board for Educator Certification, doors have opened to other entities to engage in teacher preparation. The role of community colleges in this endeavor is slowly evolving. With 70 percent of all college freshmen and sophomores enrolled in community colleges and 74 percent of all minority students entering higher education through these institutions, community colleges are being called upon to assume a stronger role in teacher preparation.

Many students who enter higher education through community colleges still do not receive substantive information about the teaching profession when they graduate from high school or before they matriculate to a university. Additionally, community colleges do not have the infrastructure to provide their students with experiences that would help them to accept or reject teaching as their professional choice. Consequently, time and money may be misdirected or unavailable to promote teaching. The most likely result of this is fewer students being recruited for teaching than would be the case if more information were available earlier. Students who have the aptitude to teach are not being recruited early enough and experiences that give them an opportunity to be in roles similar to those they would encounter as a teacher are not being provided often enough. Early orientation to the profession is often considered one of the hallmarks of a strong recruitment system.

Once students have indicated that they desire to pursue teaching as a profession, there are no systems to track them through higher education and finally into public school classrooms. This often causes persons to lose time and money pursuing ill-defined goals. Also, the grants and loans available through the state of Texas may go unused or students may fail to complete their initial plan to enter teaching, in either case diminishing the best outcome for Texas. When students lose sight of their progress toward a degree and teacher certification, they most likely will vacate their plans to become a teacher.

Articulation agreements that include particular requirements and are universally defined for the state of Texas are not in place to serve the advancement and retention of all students interested in the teaching profession. Although the Legislature has mandated defined fields of study at the lower division level of higher education, these are not in place in all fields, specifically those related to secondary (grades 8 –12) teacher certificates.

When community colleges and universities have entered into articulation agreements, arts and sciences faculty have rarely been involved in creating the agreements. Furthermore, the college of education faculty have not been involved in this process either, perhaps

resulting in unidentified barriers for students. Teacher certificates in Texas are defined by standards of knowledge that are based upon the K-12 student standards. It does not appear that these standards are always considered when the courses become a part of the articulation agreements. Consequently, students may not be receiving instruction in all of the standards they must meet to be certified. With accountability for the preparation of teachers inevitable, the standards should be integrated into all coursework that leads to teacher certification.

There is a void in technology training for teachers throughout the higher education system. Although, some institutions are moving to correct this, there is still a great deal of work to be done. Even though the survey did not address this, training for using technology within the scope of a teacher's work must be created. Generalized technology training is not sufficient. Community colleges may recognize this because they are moving to fill the void by creating alternative certification programs that address training for the technology applications teacher certificate, as well as creating technology training for all teachers in their alternative programs.

Alternative certification programs are currently in 10 community colleges across the state. Still others are planning to create programs. The community college programs are often built upon partnerships with other entities, including school districts and universities. Grow Your Own programs are becoming more popular. These most likely have the potential to attract high school students who otherwise would not have considered teaching as a profession.

Significant steps are being taken to assist teacher aides to receive degrees and become certified. The Texas Legislature, by creating forgivable loans for teacher aides, encouraged universities to create pathways for this population of persons to begin a teaching career. However, because many of these persons are first enrolled in community colleges, the seamless system of training for certification needs to be strengthened. This is a vitally important source of future teachers that should be mined by public schools, community colleges, and universities. Some universities have indicated that they offer options for taking coursework that appeal to different groups of candidates for certification, including teacher aides.

From the surveys, the most often cited barrier to increased involvement in teacher preparation was inadequate funding. The need for faculty that are qualified to teach courses for future teachers was cited less often. The survey findings seem to indicate that infrastructures need to be created within all institutions to provide direction, depth, and sustainability of activities. Well-executed systems are necessary if the number of teachers needed for Texas' public schools is to be increased.

Across the board, community colleges are very interested in helping to solve the teacher shortage problem in Texas. All of the elements are in place for partnerships PK-16 to evolve to a seamless pipeline of candidates who will enter the classroom. While offering opportunities for degreed persons to become certified through alternative certification

programs in community colleges, the commitment to preparing undergraduate students for teaching in their freshman and sophomore years is very apparent.

SURVEY PARTICIPATION

Community College Participation

There are 50 community college districts authorized by the Higher Education Coordinating Board in Texas. In several of these districts, there are multiple campuses that operate with differing degrees of autonomy. Several of the individual campuses within a single community college district responded to the surveys. The total number of completed surveys from community colleges was 45.

The persons who completed the survey were presidents and chancellors of community college districts, presidents of individual colleges, deans of academic instruction, vice-chancellors, deans of liberal arts, etc. Almost all of the survey respondents are responsible in some way for instruction that could affect future teacher candidates.

University Participation

The number of teacher preparation programs in Texas' public and independent universities is 69. Of this number, 36 (approximately 50 percent) responded to the survey. Most of the respondents were deans of education.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Survey questions were created that addressed the purposes cited above and also particular issues that were likely to be on-going in Texas. The content of the survey reflects issues identified in discussions that have occurred across the state in the last several years, including those of the Sid Richardson Foundation Forum that issued the report entitled Excellent Teachers for All Texas Schools: Proposals for Engaging Educational Stakeholders in Concerted Action. The forum was convened to examine the efforts necessary to achieve a seamless PK-12 education system for the state of Texas.

In September 2001, the Texas Association of Community Schools and ECS hosted a meeting in Austin of the presidents of the community colleges and a representative group of deans of education in public and independent universities. At this meeting, other issues affecting the state's ability to produce an adequate number of teachers were identified. In addition, the group discussed barriers to improved collaboration between community colleges and universities. Consequently, many of these issues, including barriers, were represented in the survey to determine the extent to which these are of concern. Still other topics covered on the survey were raised during conversations between project staff and staff of universities and community colleges.

The first draft of the survey was reviewed by several persons in the state familiar with the issues, including staff of the Texas state agency responsible for the preparation of Texas educators, the State Board for Educator Certification, the Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the Academy for Educational Development. After preparing the final survey, it was distributed in January 2002 to all community college presidents and deans of education in both public and independent universities. The surveys were distributed by email with responses received February through April.

FINDINGS

- **Both community colleges and universities are interested in making it easier for students to move between institutions of higher education in their pursuit of a teaching career.**

Just less than one-half of the universities had communicated to community college administrators and faculty the requirements or standards which a person must meet to receive a teacher certificate.

However, 61 percent of community colleges and 55 percent of the universities indicated that they had entered into articulation agreements specific to teacher preparation .

Where articulation agreements are in place, one-half of all the respondents indicated that the agreements have fostered one-on-one advising with students.

A relatively low number of institutions engaged the faculty of arts and sciences (universities, 33% and community colleges, 43%) in the creation of the articulation agreements. However, over 50% of all the universities involved faculty from their departments of education in this endeavor.

- **Activities to recruit persons into teaching were undertaken more often by universities than by community colleges.**

Almost 90 percent of the universities responding to the survey reported that they had specific initiatives to recruit teachers compared to 57 percent of community colleges.

Seventy-eight percent of the universities report partnerships with public school districts to recruit teachers while only one-half of the community colleges had done so.

The universities report that they have focused their recruitment activities on minority and non-traditional teacher candidates. Fully two-thirds of the universities have created or identified special grants or loans for students pursuing

teaching and one-third of these are available to students beginning their work in community colleges.

Community colleges have been slow to communicate to public school counselors the requirements for a student to become a teacher (32%) and how the community college can serve the students. Universities seem to be more active in disseminating this information to public school counselors, as well as to community college administrators.

Many of the universities (78%) have created activities designed specifically to interest high school students in teaching while community colleges, in general, have not yet done so.

- **Tracking students through higher education and into teaching was a problem voiced equally by community colleges and universities. Fully two-thirds of all respondents indicated that this was one of the most significant barriers to increasing the community college role in teacher preparation.**

Inconsistent articulation agreements between institutions was cited by community colleges as a very significant barrier to advancing students, but understandably, universities did not view it in the same way.

- Community colleges have not yet begun to engage their students in early field experiences that can interest or train students for teaching. When this does occur, most of the students are involved in volunteer work. In contrast, universities are providing more opportunities, such as volunteering in PK-12 classrooms, community service, coursework offered on public school campuses, and participation in education clubs. Universities have been required by state policy to implement field-based programs for many years, but there is no such requirement for community colleges to do so.
- **Sharing facilities between community colleges and universities for teacher preparation courses or other activities is beginning to occur. Some community colleges (45%) and universities (39%) have established such agreements.**
- **Both universities and community colleges engage in training degreed persons for the teaching profession.**

Community colleges offer alternative certification programs and universities that have traditionally offered post-baccalaureate programs (usually masters programs), are now adding alternative certification programs.

One-third of the community colleges indicated they have added alternative certification programs or have significantly advanced their planning to do so.

About 70 percent of the universities have indicated that they currently offer opportunities for already degreed persons to become prepared for teaching.

- **Community colleges appear to be moving toward creating more seamless or sequential programs to move teacher aides directly into a teacher preparation program.**

Thirty-four percent of community colleges report that they are taking steps to make training for teacher aides easier and 50 percent of the universities report that they already have such programs in place.

Both community colleges and universities are offering more opportunities for teacher aides to receive training for their current role (61%).

- **There is a crucial need to train teachers to use technology in the classroom.**

Continuing education coursework or workshops are the traditional way of advancing new knowledge and skill needed by teachers. 70 percent of the universities preparing teachers indicate that they have technology workshops, etc. that draw persons needing to improve their skills. One-half of the universities offer added training, sometimes leading to certification, specifically for computer applications teachers, but fewer than 20 percent have technology continuing education directly related to technology used in trades courses in the public schools.

Community colleges have not yet stepped up to fill the void for technology training, but may be moving to do so. One-half of them indicated that they had technology training that would be useful to any teacher. Sixteen of the community colleges indicated they had programs designed specifically for computer applications teachers and seven said they offered training in technology used in trades courses.

- **Over one-half of all of the respondents, university and community college, indicated that they needed models or exemplary practices to emulate to increase the community college role in teacher preparation.**
- **The capacity to change or to enhance the training of teachers was identified as problematic by many respondents.**

Limited funding was cited by over 80 percent of all respondents as a barrier to increasing the community college role in teacher preparation, but just as important, one-half of the university respondents indicated that they needed incentives to collaborate with community colleges in more meaningful ways.

Funding to support the infrastructure necessary to create and administer programs, particularly alternative certification programs, is needed to bring alternative certification through community colleges up to the scale that is both necessary and desired. The large community college districts that are interested in alternative certification programs report this to be a barrier, but not a deterrent to moving forward.

Almost 60% of the community college respondents said they needed incentives to offer courses or other relevant experiences to students considering teaching. The availability of qualified faculty was not as problematic as other issues (only 25% of universities and 32% of colleges)

Also, the technology infrastructure to deliver instruction was cited as an issue by about 30 percent of the respondents.

- **Community colleges (80%) report that they are considering many of the ideas represented in the content of the survey in contrast to less than one-half of the university respondents.**

The community college respondents mentioned that they are considering the following ideas:

- Focus on training for the technology certificates offered by the state certification board and continuing education in the use of technology for current teachers
- Creation or expansion of alternative certification programs that may include local school districts, and in one case, partnering with another community college
- Cooperative use of facilities to offer courses
- Distance education courses that serve rural and place bound citizens
- Job shadowing experiences, teacher field experiences
- Support for new teachers
- Technology training for all teachers
- Replicating programs offered on selected college campuses on all community college district campuses
- Increased attention to training teacher aides for teaching
- One college is seeking a grant to develop an education department/program that specifically includes science, math, and pedagogy.
- Creation of scholarship opportunities between the college, school district, and university for all students committing to teach for four years
- Focus on training teachers for trades and industry certificates that are available to non-degreed persons
- Offering courses for future teachers in the enrichment curriculum of the public schools at the community college, e.g. an art course for potential elementary teachers

- Creating an AS degree for teacher aides, as well as continuing education opportunities

Universities report that they also are exploring different options for improving collaboration that will eventually result in more students seeking teaching as their career goal. Ideas being considered by universities include the following:

- Offering scholarships for the entire period of enrollment in both a community college and university for persons willing to pursue teaching
- Supporting beginning teachers in their first year of employment through the TxBESS program
- Collaborating with community colleges and school districts to create Grow Your Own programs
- Team teaching between community college and university faculty beginning at the freshman level (funding barriers exist!)
- Soliciting applicants for programs that are below capacity at the university, such as bilingual and special education, secondary math and science, languages other than English, and physical education (other fields of preparation are at or above capacity)
- Diversifying programs so that they appeal to and meet specific population needs, e.g. day program for 18-24 year olds; alternative certification for degreed persons; evening program that targets teacher aides and other non-degreed and employed persons
- Developing a special “summit” to meet with community college faculty to identify the certification standards being taught in each course that will result in a course articulation agreement
- Teaching education courses at the community college

The Appendix includes a list of programs submitted by entities that they consider exemplary practices or models for others to examine. These programs have not been reviewed or judged and are included for the readers to review to determine if these meet their needs.

APPENDIX

COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS FOR TRAINING TEACHERS IDENTIFIED AS POTENTIALLY REPLICABLE *

Houston Community College System

Creation of articulation agreements with all Gulf Coast area community colleges and universities

Title II grant from the U.S. Department of Education with partners from area universities, school districts, and the Annenberg Foundation to foster improved teaching in the college core courses to “model” good teaching for students who are prospective teachers.

Collin County Community College

Service learning project for all students enrolled in their Introduction to Education courses

Articulation agreement that provides for persons in their alternative certification program to receive graduate credit in Technology Education and secondary education fields at an area university

Collaboration with the North Texas Workforce Board and the U.S. Department of Labor to receive a grant for full scholarships to teachers seeking certification in technology

U.S. Department of Education PT3 grant to infuse into the alternative certification program instruction in technology for all teachers, thus not limiting training in technology to persons in their Technology Applications program.

Mountain View Community College

A collaborative program between Dallas ISD Area 6 campuses and the University of North Texas (soon to be expanded to other universities)

Northeast Texas Community College model with Texas A&M Commerce

Vernon College program for rural Texans and partnering Region IX for technology certification through an alternative program

St. Edward's University, Concordia University, and University of the Incarnate Word

Training intern and mentor teachers in technology applications related to curriculum and classroom practice

Tyler Community College materials sharing project

San Jacinto Community College Grow Your Own Program; Aeospace Academy "Making Connections class

San Jacinto College North recognized as exemplary program by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

Dallas County Community College District

Teacher Training Academies
Grow Your Own Program
Urban Education Associates Degree for future teachers
Educational Personnel Associates Degree
Title VII Bilingual Education grant with Texas Woman's University

Palo Alto College

Workshop on Advancing the Humanities in Teacher Preparation funded by NEH

University of Houston – Clear Lake

Program with Lee College and the Goose Creek ISD called Baytown Areas Education Recruitment and Retention, BAER2 (bear)

Del Mar College Scholar Program with Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi

Also the Teacher Start and and Teacher Express Program

A&M System Regents Initiative

Multi-faceted involving school districts and community colleges

Houston Endowment Project

Partnering with community colleges to attract students beginning college into later entering teacher training at Texas A&M University System schools. Scholarships are provided and a person is located on each community college campus as a liaison between the programs to help faculty and students

St. Edward's University

The Austin ENLACE program supporting Hispanic students as they continue through the education pipeline

Austin ISD teaching pathways committee

The South Texas Center for Professional Development of Teachers

Project includes South Texas Community College, University of Texas – Pan American and seven area school districts to jointly oversee the field-based preparation of teachers

Alamo Community College and the University of the Incarnate Word

*These programs have not been reviewed to determine if they are effective or meet the goals for which they were designed.

