

Ohio Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Position on:

Participating with National Council on Teacher Quality and *U.S. News & World Report* Joint Survey of Teacher Education

The Ohio Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (OACTE) consists of the State University Education Deans (SUED) of Ohio, representing the 13 public universities with educator preparation programs, and the Ohio Association for Private Colleges of Teacher Education (OAPCTE), representing 35 of the 37 private institutions with educator preparation programs. OACTE would like to take this opportunity to comment on the ongoing National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ)/*U.S. News & World Report* survey of 1,000 teacher preparation programs in the United States.

We begin by asserting, once again, our commitment to the effective professional preparation of teachers and our willingness to be accountable for the quality of the teachers we prepare. To ensure that all of Ohio's school-age students have access to the best professionally prepared teachers is our highest priority. And to that end, we have undertaken a regular collection and analysis of data on educator performance sufficiently robust to verify that our graduates meet the rigorous standards set by the Ohio Department of Education. Indeed, through the Teacher Quality Partnership program, initiated more than a decade ago, OACTE institutions took the lead nationwide in finding ways to assure such accountability. Evidence-based standards and transparency of process are the keys to public accountability and public trust. As we understood then and reaffirm now, other key constituents—the students, parents, and employers of Ohio—have a stake in these outcomes that is at least the equal of our own.

Concerns with the NCTQ Study

The members of the OACTE share concerns about the proposed survey by the National Council for Teacher Quality (NCTQ) and its ability to provide the kind of data that will be useful to Ohio's citizens. The NCTQ is a research and policy group of select individuals which has enlisted *U.S. News & World Report* to publish a ranking of teacher preparation programs across the country. To collect data for this survey, the NCTQ asks schools of education to submit information on selected program inputs, such as admission criteria, course syllabi, course descriptions, and student teaching handbooks. The NCTQ then compares the course syllabi and other materials against a set of standards developed solely by the organization itself in order to determine the quality of these programs. Even if one overlooks the opacity of the process by which the NCTQ purports to evaluate teacher preparation programs, it is evident that the *principle* on which its approach rests is itself flawed. The NCTQ's effort focuses exclusively on the inputs of a program—admissions criteria, course descriptions, and so on—with no consideration for the quality of the new teachers it produces—their level of preparedness, their knowledge of subject matter content, their pedagogical competence. As others have pointed out, the approach is a bit like a food critic rating a restaurant on the basis of its menu without ever tasting its food or service.

In response to this criticism, the NCTQ has agreed to include the value-added scores of the students of program graduates as well as the performance assessment scores of student teachers, but only from the handful of states (including Ohio) in which that information is available. While this inclusion is an improvement on the original methodology, it serves to call into question the validity of the NCTQ's claim to have the capacity to conduct a survey leading to the *nationwide* ranking of teacher education programs.

According to the NCTQ's website, the organization's mission is "to provide an *alternative* national voice to existing teacher organizations, and build the case for a comprehensive reform agenda (to) *challenge* the current structure and regulation of the profession" (italics added). While alternative voices are always important in a democracy, this stated goal calls into question the NCTQ's ability to conduct a fair and disinterested rating that will inform the debate about the best way to prepare teachers professionally. We are concerned that the NCTQ is conducting this study to drive a different agenda forward. Thus, we raise the question: What is their alternative proposition?

Effective Teacher Education and Accountability

The members of the OACTE are committed to strengthening teacher education programs and building our capacity to prepare professional educators who can teach and support every child. The quality of our programs is

regulated by the Ohio Board of Regents—a publicly accountable body—and our graduates must meet the requirements for a professional educator license established by the Ohio Department of Education. Additionally, our programs must pass a rigorous and extensive review process by national accreditation bodies. These accountability measures are designed to protect the public interest, and we embrace them willingly.

We passionately believe that Ohio citizens deserve teacher education programs that produce highly qualified and effective teachers for our schools. As noted above, we took the lead nationwide in such efforts by establishing the Teacher Quality Partnership as an initial step toward linking the performance of the teachers we produce to the quality of our education programs. More recently, we have worked closely with the Ohio Board of Regents to develop the Ohio Educator Preparation Metrics, a statewide set of criteria to monitor the quality of our educator preparation programs. These metrics include such indicators of quality as licensure test results, the new Teacher Performance Assessment, and data on the value added by our teachers to the academic performance of students in their classroom. Also included are our partnerships with struggling schools, placement of graduates in hard-to-staff schools, and a survey of employer satisfaction with graduates.

Participation in the NCTQ Study

That there is room for improvement in our educator preparation programs, there is no doubt. For this reason, OACTE member institutions have worked with the Ohio Board of Regents to develop the Ohio Educator Preparation Metrics in order to bring to light areas needing improvement as well as to focus a spotlight on areas of excellence. The results will be open to the public by 2012. The rest of the country will be watching us, and we welcome this scrutiny. Through this process, we have demonstrated that we can agree on honest, fair, and effective ways to rate education programs by working collaboratively and by making the process open and transparent. It is our considered opinion that the survey methodology selected by the NCTQ leadership does not reflect these values and that the motivations for this undertaking arise from an adversarial stance.

The OACTE's member institutions will decide independently whether or not to participate in the NCTQ process. Regardless of the decision institutions make, there remain concerns and questions about the NCTQ's motivations, its current actions, and its proposed methods. We strongly denounce any attempt, whether explicit or implied, to coerce institutions to provide data for the study. Institutions of higher education and professional educational organizations from around the nation have invited *USN&WR* and the NCTQ to work collegially with us to strengthen the study and its methods. It is our hope that *USNWR* and the NCTQ will accept this invitation.

The OACTE and its member institutions are confident that Ohio is moving in the right direction to ensure that we have outstanding teacher education programs across the state. We are also convinced that the Ohio Educator Preparation Metrics represent an honest, fair, and effective way to inform the citizens of Ohio about how well we are performing. We welcome the renewed public interest in the professional training of teachers. Teaching matters, and we have an obligation to provide our future teachers with the best professional training available to help our students reach their fullest potential. The children and families in Ohio and this nation deserve nothing less.

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