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DATE: December 22, 2008
TO: Obama-Biden Transition Project
Agency Review Team
FROM: Nancy Green, NAGC Executive Director
Jane Clarenbach, NAGC Director of Public Education
RE: Recommendations for Improving Implementation of HEOA

As you know, The U.S. Congress recently amended Title II of the Higher Education Opportunities Act (HEOA) was recently amended. The Act now focuses on the need for pre-service teacher candidates to be able to recognize and address the special learning needs of four specific populations of children:

- Gifted and talented students;
- Students with disabilities;
- Students with limited English proficiency; and
- Students with low literacy levels

The revisions to HEOA also require states to develop criteria to assess teacher preparation programs in each of these "teaching skills" areas and to report the progress of those programs to the Department of Education via states' report cards on teacher preparation quality. Included in this memo are three recommendations for ensuring the intent of The Congress is implemented.

HEOA Provisions

These changes represent a new focus for Congress and they provide several new responsibilities and opportunities for the Office of Post-Secondary Education. There are three key changes in HEOA (see attached for legislative language) that hold both institutions of higher education (IHE) and state education agencies responsible for teacher preparation program assessments. These agencies and organizations must re-think how their pre-service preparation programs for teachers address the learning needs of students in each of the four at-risk populations listed above. The provisions are:

- 1) Definition of "Teaching Skills" [sec. 200(23)]. For the first time, the term "teaching skills" is defined in HEOA and is used throughout Title II.
 - **Recommendation: Ensure that grant applicants will now have to incorporate special student learning needs into their applications.**
- 2) Required Reforms [sec.202(d)(1)(B)]. The primary grant program in Title II has been modified to require a series of teacher preparation program reforms. Among the specific reforms is a requirement that candidates understand how each of the four populations of



children learns and that they have the necessary teaching skills to differentiate instruction for each.

- **Recommendation: Ensure that grant applicants consider and include in their application how they will modify their instruction so that teacher candidates will receive, at a minimum, an introduction to the needs of gifted students, disabled students, limited English proficiency students, and low literacy level students.**
- 3) State Report Cards on Teacher Preparation Quality (sec. 205(b)). States currently submit data to the Department of Education on the criteria used by the state to assess the performance of teacher preparation programs within their states. New language was added in HEOA that requires states to include criteria on the teaching skills of the students enrolled in teacher preparation programs.
- **Recommendation: Ensure that States develop criteria for measuring how well teacher preparation programs prepare all candidates in the needs of the four specific populations of children. Revise the U.S. Department of Education's HEOA Title II, data collection tool to capture the newly required information regarding teacher preparedness for instructing students in the four designated populations.**