



**To:** Linda Darling-Hammond and Members of the Education Transition Team  
**From:** Sharon P. Robinson, President and CEO, AACTE  
**Date:** December 9, 2008  
**Re:** Recommendations for the U.S. Department of Education

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Attached please find several recommendations for you and your colleagues on President-elect Obama's education transition team to consider as you review the U.S. Department of Education and begin to set priorities for 2009.

The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) is a national voluntary association of higher education institutions and other organizations and is dedicated to ensuring the highest quality preparation and continuing professional development for teachers and school leaders. Our overarching mission is to enhance PK-12 student learning. Collectively, the AACTE membership (almost 800 institutions) prepares more than two-thirds of the new teachers entering schools each year in the United States.

If you would like to discuss these recommendations, please contact me at (202) 293-2450 x505 or contact Dr. Jane E. West, Senior Vice President for Policy, Programs, and Professional Issues at [jwest@acte.org](mailto:jwest@acte.org) or (202) 293-2450 x593.



## Recommendations for the Transition Team

### Submitted by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

AACTE urges the Department to provide leadership and a strong voice for university-based educator preparation programs. Under the current Administration, these programs have been consistently devalued even though they prepare the vast majority of teachers in the United States through undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, and graduate programs. Funding for the Teacher Quality Partnership Grant program has dwindled over the last several years, reaching an all time low last year at \$33.6 million. Unproven and often ineffective alternate route programs have been held up as examples of high quality teacher preparation.

#### Economic Stimulus Package

**We strongly urge you to include in the next economic stimulus bill funding to support education – in particular, for developing higher quality and increased numbers of teachers.** While the convergence of several factors will lead to an economic recovery, key to this is increasing the quality of new entrants in the job market who are ready to contribute in labor and intellect. By increasing the number and quality of teachers entering the K-12 classrooms this will directly lead to improving the quality of candidates entering the job market. AACTE recommends that the Administration advocate for including funding for the following three initiatives in the next stimulus package.

- **Fund a National Corps of Teacher Leaders** – Key to increasing teacher retention is providing strong professional development and mentoring. Teacher leaders play a critical role in creating cultures of learning and pedagogical support for new teachers. Research estimates that it can cost up to \$20,000 for a district to replace a teacher. Multiply that number by the hundreds for many districts, particularly urban ones, and it becomes clear that teacher turnover consumes a significant portion of school district budgets. Additionally, teachers who leave the classroom tend to do so more because of the lack of support to enhance their content knowledge and pedagogical skills than for the salary. Strengthening the quality and number of teacher leaders in every school will contribute to higher teacher retention and more effective teaching.
- **Fund the Teacher Quality Partnership Grants (Title II, HEOA) at \$100 million to support the creation of teacher residency programs and to fulfill President-elect Obama's campaign promise to prepare 30,000 new teachers a year.** Currently funded at \$33.6million (authorized at \$300 million), this program serves as the federal government's main support to university-based educator preparation programs. Funding has decreased from a high of \$98 million to its current level of \$33.6 million over the last several years. The Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) restructured the program so that funds can be used to strengthen the clinical components at the pre-baccalaureate level or to create teacher residency programs at the graduate level. Teacher residency programs, already found at a few institutions, have been shown to increase teacher retention as well as teacher effectiveness. In order to prepare 30,000 new teachers each year through the residency programs (which require residents to be paid living stipends), though, the federal government must significantly increase its investment in the Teacher Quality Partnership grants. HEOA also requires that institutions provide a 100% match



for any federal funds received under this program. Thus, the government would essentially double any investment in these highly effective teacher preparation programs. Funding the program at \$100 million will allow institutions to prepare 10,000 new teachers (offering living stipends of \$20,000), which is a significant first step toward reaching President-elect Obama's goal of 30,000 new teachers.

- **Fund the Teachers for a Competitive Tomorrow at \$60 million.**— This grant program was authorized in the America COMPETES Act and is funded at less than \$2 million. This competitive grant program helps higher education institutions build baccalaureate and master's degree programs that allow students to major in STEM fields while working toward teacher certification. According to recent TIMSS results, the United States still lags in science achievement and has made some progress in math achievement. By increasing the capacity of institutions to prepare more teachers in these key fields, America can make greater strides toward regaining leadership in the innovation fields.

### Higher Education Opportunity Act

- **Increase funding to \$100 million for the Teacher Quality Partnership program in Title II of the Higher Education Opportunity Act to support the creation of teacher residency programs and to fulfill President-elect Obama's campaign promise to prepare 30,000 new teachers a year.** *See the first bullet in the previous section.*
- **Fund the Teach to Reach Grants (Title II) at \$30 million.** This is a new program authorized in the Higher Education Opportunity Act that, if funded, would provide support to teacher preparation programs at IHEs to ensure that all teacher candidates are prepared to teach children with special needs. Given the increasing number of K-12 students with IEPs and the special education teachers, this new program would contribute to increasing the number of teachers who are prepared and ready to be effective in teaching children with special needs.
- **Fund the Graduate Fellowships to Prepare Faculty in High-Need Areas at Colleges of Education at \$10 million.** This is a new program authorized in the Higher Education Opportunity Act that, if funded, would increase the number of faculty at higher education institutions who prepare teachers in shortage fields such as math, science, special education, and English language learners. There is a direct correlation between the shortage of K-12 special education teachers and the number of faculty who prepare these teachers. By increasing the number of faculty in these areas at colleges of education, more teachers in these key fields will be prepared.
- **Provide leadership to hold higher education-based and non-higher education based educator preparation programs to the same standards**
  - a. **Require non-higher education based teacher preparation programs to report the same data to states as required of the higher education institutions in Title II of HEOA.** HEOA now requires that states report on non-higher education based educator preparation programs in the state report cards. These programs should be required to report the same information to the states as the higher education institutions in terms of pass rates, admission standards, how the programs are preparing teachers to teach children with special needs, English language learners, etc.
  - b. **Require all preparation programs to be professionally accredited.** President-elect Obama included in his education platform his intention to require that all teacher preparation programs be professionally accredited as one component of assuring that new teachers are sufficiently prepared to enter the classroom as the teacher of record.



## No Child Left Behind Reauthorization

- **Revoke/Modify the NCLB regulation that allows teachers of record, who are not fully licensed, to be called “highly qualified teacher”.** The NCLB statute requires that all teachers be fully certified prior to being designated “highly qualified”; however, the regulations allow for teachers who are not fully certified (but are in the process of becoming so) to be considered “highly qualified” for up to 3 years. The regulations (34 C.F.R. § 200.56(a)(2)(ii)) directly undermine the intention of the law by allowing teachers who are completing alternative certification programs to be designated as highly qualified.
- **Revise the definition of “highly qualified teacher” in Title IX to ensure that teachers are highly effective.** The definition’s current focus on content knowledge as the sole indicator of teacher quality is incomplete. The term “highly qualified” should be reserved for teachers who know their content *and* are able to teach it effectively. Prospective teachers should exhibit consistent success through a substantial pre-service clinical experience in a school setting supervised by both university- and school-based faculty. This requirement should pertain to both traditional and alternative route candidates.
- **Develop and pilot teacher performance assessments that states could adopt into their licensure systems.** The vast majority of state teacher licensing systems require teacher candidates to pass a series of paper tests related to content and pedagogical knowledge. They do not measure how effective candidates are in the classroom. By developing a teacher performance assessment that can be adopted by states, this will provide a higher level of assurance to states, schools, and parents that the new teachers being licensed are able to be effective in the classroom related to student learning and classroom management.
- **Increase the set-aside in Title II of NCLB for higher education based educator preparation programs from 2.5% to 5% to increase the capacity of institutions to prepare educators.** Currently, there is little federal funding that directly supports higher-education based educator preparation. By increasing the set-aside for higher education partnerships in Title II, Part A, this will allow for more a substantial investment in partnerships between higher education institutions and LEAs to prepare teachers and to provide high quality professional development to teachers.
- **Pilot a reciprocity agreement to facilitate teacher mobility and to ensure quality among teachers moving between states.** The federal government needs to invest in state consortiums that will facilitate teacher mobility while ensuring teacher quality and will allow states to more easily fill hard-to-staff schools and subjects.