



South Carolina Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

February 15, 2010

Dear Education Deans:

U.S. News and World Report (USNWR) has announced plans to provide evaluations of university- and college-based teacher preparation programs in partnership with the National Council for Teacher Quality (NCTQ). NCTQ has a history of rating teacher education programs using limited and narrow research methodologies. Among its studies are evaluations of all teacher education programs in two states (Texas and Illinois) as well as more targeted studies of aspects of elementary education programs. Institutions involved in these efforts have been highly critical of the methods used by NCTQ as well as their published outcomes. In the present effort, NCTQ intends to rate the quality of approximately 1000 programs across the country according to how those programs address 17 standards. NCTQ proposes only to review materials such as course catalogs, a limited number of course syllabi, and student teaching manuals for their evaluation. Based upon those reviews, each preparation program will ultimately be given a grade from A to F.

The South Carolina Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (SCACTE) is joining other state and national organizations such as the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, the Council of Academic Deans from Research Education Institutions, and the Virginia Association of Colleges of Teacher Education to voice serious concerns regarding NCTQ evaluation methods. These concerns include:

- The lack of a strong evidence-base regarding the standards that are being used as well as a lack of alignment of NCTQ standards to established research-based standards (e.g., quality of instruction, student support services, teacher induction). Therefore, the validity of this type of project is highly questionable.
- The focus solely on input data (e.g., course descriptions) without commensurate attention being paid to outcomes (e.g., the knowledge that teacher candidates possess and the skills that they are able to demonstrate). This focus exhibits disregard for methods developed by national accrediting bodies that recognize that teaching is an output-driven profession.
- The intent to provide an estimated rating to programs that refuse to participate based upon utilizing open-records solicitation requests. NCTQ has used this confrontational strategy in the past and it flies in the face of appropriate research practice.
- The history of NCTQ to dismiss any clarifying information that a program might submit to rebut a grade or rating.

- A negative bias exhibited toward comprehensive teacher preparation programs by NCTQ in prior evaluation projects as well as in various written communications.

The teacher preparation programs in South Carolina subscribe to high state standards including those of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. Teacher certification rules and standards are put forth by our General Assembly, drafted by the State Department of Education, and approved by the State Board of Education. Such rules ought not to be propagated by private organizations that have political agendas.

There should be no doubt that our teacher preparation programs ought to be held accountable for adhering to high standards. None of our programs fear scrutiny or public disclosure. However, initiatives such as this should be based upon scientific and ethical standards. To that end, until NCTQ sits down with teacher education programs to design an agreed upon methodology that addresses these concerns SCACTE recommends that our State's institutions of higher education not participate in this project.

Respectfully submitted,

SCACTE Board of Directors

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