

# Teacher Education Study Team Draft Report

## Preface

One of the issues that the Task Force struggled with in developing this plan was the question of how much attention to focus on issues that are of immediate importance in teacher education due to impending certification changes mandated by the Commonwealth. Clearly these mandates including the requirement for 9 credits or 270 hours (or some combination thereof) that address issues of classroom adaptations and accommodations for diverse learners as well as the 3 credit or 90 hours (or some combination thereof) that address working successfully with English Language Learners have both programmatic and resource implications for all teacher education programs. They potentially have major resource implications for the program areas that have traditionally taught courses in these areas (e.g., Special Education, English as a Second Language, etc.)

In addition the certification changes to P-4, 4-8 and 7-12 as well as the mandate for dual certification for special education teachers have programmatic and resource implications. Task Force members believe that these issues must be addressed. However, since they are already being addressed by individual teacher education programs as well as by the over-arching group that focuses on teacher education within the University, the PCCC group, we felt that the major focus for our report should be on long-term goals as opposed to these immediate concerns. Task Force members believed that our teacher education programs and other certification programs seem to be in a constant reactive mode forced on them by external agencies such as PDE and NCATE. As a result, it is difficult to do any long-range planning in a meaningful way. Thus, we felt it would be a lost opportunity if our report did not focus on long-term goals. We are not suggesting that immediate issues can be ignored.

### Area 1 – Strengthening Teacher Preparation

**Goal 1: The College of Education should develop a variety of mechanisms for working collaboratively with practitioners to enhance the quality of our teacher education programs.**

**Rationale:** No single institution can accomplish high quality teacher preparation in isolation. High quality teacher preparation necessitates working collaboratively with pre-school and school-based practitioners from a variety of roles including administrators, teachers, curriculum, personnel and community agencies. If we do not work systematically to help to create field placements sites that model the practices and values espoused by our teacher preparation programs, much of what is taught on campus is likely to be washed out even before entry into the profession. Conversely, teacher education programs that are developed without input and feedback from practitioners are unlikely to address some of the most pressing practical problems that are faced by educators today. The success of our elementary and secondary PDS partnerships with State College, our ongoing elementary partnership with Bellefonte, and our growing and

potentially far-reaching collaboration with Isaac Shepherd Elementary in Philadelphia all testify to the power of school-university collaboration. Systematic efforts to increase dialogue among university-based educators and school-based educators are likely to pay great dividends in enhancing the quality and reputation of our teacher education programs. The Pennsylvania School Study Council and the Center for Rural Education may be able to play a significant role in encouraging these activities. Special attention needs to be paid to collaborating with preschool and pre-kindergarten sites. Changes in state certification will make it imperative that we establish positive relationships and high quality field placements in those types of settings.

### **Potential Strategies**

- Create PDS like partnerships with a wider variety of schools
- Offer professional development workshops or courses to mentor teachers either in residence, through continuing education or online
- Collaborate with administrators and veteran teachers in developing, delivering and evaluating teacher induction programs
- Create teacher networks, both face to face and virtual, around specific subjects, educational levels or areas of interest
- Offer credit vouchers to mentor teachers to encourage them to pursue graduate work
- Institute a variety of mechanisms including online surveys, advisory boards, and face to face meetings to solicit input and feedback from school and pre-school practitioners
- Create online Masters degrees, similar to Children's Literature and Teacher Leadership, that would interest mentors and potential mentors
- Build on the "teacher club" idea that is currently being used to link pre-school and primary teachers in a network interested in P-4 certification issues

**Goal 2: Steps should be taken to insure that all teacher education programs in the College are of an appropriate size so that faculty are able to develop programs that employ research-based practices that match the values and principles that the College and faculty members espouse.**

**Rationale:** Currently, the size of teacher education programs varies widely across the College. Some, but by no means all, of this variance in size is by design. Steps are currently being taken to increase the number of faculty in the elementary education program so that all students will have more opportunities to be taught by tenure track faculty. While increasing the number of faculty alleviates one problem, it does not alleviate others. Given the sparsely populated nature of the school districts that surround the University, it has been more and more difficult to find suitable field placement sites for all of our elementary and secondary education majors. This necessitates having many students drive 50 miles or more to their field sites and makes it difficult to develop sustainable partnerships. In addition, the state requirements for more intense course work in special education and in English language learning are likely to place a very heavy burden on faculty in special education, world languages and literacy and applied linguistics

### **Potential Strategies**

- Establish a task force to develop recommendations for identifying the appropriate size for a high quality, research-based teacher education program in our geographic context.
- Reduce the size of the elementary education program
- Reduce the size of the secondary education program in selected areas where there are not great needs for teachers (e.g. social studies)
- Offset the credit reductions by growing the Ed Theory and Policy undergraduate major that does not require school placements and is not regulated by teacher certification requirements
- Offset the credit reductions at the undergraduate level by growing doctoral level teacher education as noted below.
- Offset the credit reduction by developing more general education courses that might appeal to students with an interest in education but who do not want to become teachers.

### **Goal 3: Use the College's already established strength in technology to enhance the quality of our teacher preparations programs**

**Rationale:** In the last strategic plan, the College made a strong commitment to increasing its use of technology to enhance teaching and learning across the college. This has resulted in some significant steps forward including the EDUCATE initiative. There are some perennial and pervasive issues in teacher education, including delivery of high quality early field experiences and the necessity for maintaining linkages and conducting follow-up studies with our graduates that could potentially be addressed very successfully through technology. If we were able to address such issues with technology, our reputation as an institution would be enhanced in both teacher education and technology.

### **Potential Strategies**

- Use technology to provide a significant portion of the early field experiences in order to decrease the need for student travel, to ease the stress on local schools and pre-schools and to introduce students to the benefits of using technological tools to study the practice of teaching and learning
- Use technology to establish virtual linkages and partnerships with schools and pre-schools
- Strengthen courses that focus on teaching and learning by enhancing the use of technology as a delivery mechanism as well as a tool for studying teaching and learning
- Use technology (such as Ed Lion) to establish linkages with alumni and also to conduct follow up studies of our alumni from the perspective of both our alumni as well as their employers

- Work with colleagues in the arts and sciences where necessary to increase the use of technology in content preparation courses as well as to broaden the definition of literacy to include non-print and digital media
- Provide infrastructure upgrades in university classrooms and laboratories that will allow faculty to enhance the use of technology in teacher education courses
- Provide ongoing professional development for faculty and graduate students to enhance their capacity to use technology in teaching and learning courses.

## **Area 2 - Doctoral Level Teacher Education and Research**

### **Goal 4: Establish a Center for Research on Teacher Education to enhance our national reputation and visibility in teacher education**

**Rationale:** Strengthening our teacher education programs is critically important in preparing successful teachers who will positively impact the students, schools and communities in which they teach. Strengthening our teacher preparation programs needs to go hand in hand with systematic efforts to build our capacity as an institution to initiate and sustain programmatic research focused on our teacher preparation efforts. Currently, there are many individual faculty members across the College and the University who are engaged in research on teacher education. Most of these research efforts are undertaken individually, or at best, with one or two close colleagues. If a Center for Research on Teacher Education were established, this would enable the College to link faculty across programs in order to strengthen the quality of individual research efforts as well as to enhance our ability to obtain external funding from foundations and government agencies. Some of our current efforts such as our PDS efforts and EDUCATE can be fruitful grounds for research in teacher education, but we currently do not have any mechanism that links potential researchers in these areas with faculty who are so busy doing the work on a daily basis that they have difficulty finding time to research their own efforts.

#### **Potential Strategies:**

- Explore linkages among the “Applied Development and Education Sciences” center being suggested by the Intervention Study Team, the “Center for Excellence in Teaching” being suggested by the Technology study team and this “Center for Research on Teacher Education.”
- Consider the establishment of regularly scheduled University-wide symposia on teacher education research that would include an external speaker but would focus primarily on highlighting research across the University.
- Consider providing seed money, course releases and other types of support to encourage faculty collaboration across programs and departments on research projects in teacher education

**Goal 5: Encourage the development of a cross-disciplinary doctoral level program in teacher education that would supplement graduate study in specific disciplines or subjects**

**Rationale:** A significant number of doctoral graduates from across The College take positions as faculty members in teacher education at a variety of institutions. The degree to which individual doctoral students are well prepared to assume faculty roles varies widely across programs. Some doctoral programs pay close attention to the task of preparing doctoral students for their future roles and socializing them into higher education. Other programs do not have mechanisms for accomplishing this task. At present, there is no program of study, either major or minor/cognate that purposefully addresses the task of preparing faculty members for teacher preparation programs. The current association with the Carnegie Foundation D. Ed project may prove to be a very useful connection for advancing the issue of doctoral level teacher education. It might help us to conceptualize the task of preparing future teacher educators more fully and systematically.

**Potential Strategies**

- Support the work of the faculty group that has been exploring doctoral level teacher education
- Purposefully explore the link between the Carnegie Foundation D.ED work and doctoral level teacher education
- Establish a minor or cognate area of study at the doctoral level in teacher education
- Establish a degree program in teacher education that could be taken concurrently with another degree, similar to Comparative and International Education.
- Investigate initiation of an in-house certificate to authenticate preparation as a teacher educator

**Area 3 - Diversity and Globalization**

**Goal 6: The College of Education should develop a systematic plan, including incentives and scholarships, to recruit and retain a more diverse student population for its initial teacher preparation programs and also to recruit students in general to high need and under populated areas of certification.**

**Rationale:** The current population of students from traditionally under-represented groups in our initial teacher preparations programs is not sufficient. The College does undertake concerted efforts to recruit students of color, primarily through the Certification and Advising Office and the Office of Multicultural Student Services. These recruitment efforts are hampered by a lack of financial incentives and scholarships targeted at incoming freshmen. We are recruiting academically talented students of color who are often able to obtain more money at an earlier date from some of the other high quality institutions to which they have applied. College-wide

efforts to recruit talented students from under-represented groups, backed by targeted scholarships and incentives, are needed to increase this population of students in teacher education.

### **Potential Strategies**

- Target the establishment of scholarships for incoming freshmen from traditionally under-represented groups in our upcoming development campaign
- Involve program faculty, who are willing to do so, in recruiting students of diverse backgrounds and also in summer events, such as “Spend a Summer Day.”
- Involve College alumni, especially, those from traditionally underrepresented groups in efforts to recruit incoming students
- Study the feasibility and cost-benefits of employing a staff member whose job is recruitment of targeted student populations for the College
- Establish a network of support including clear advising guidelines, support structures, and potential policy changes that would support students of diverse backgrounds who do not choose teacher education as their initial major but later wish to change into education. Some students, who have the potential to be fine teachers, begin their academic careers in other majors where they are not successful because the career does not suit them, but they often find it difficult to move into teacher education due to stringent admission requirements for the major.

**Goal 7: Establish a Task Force to develop a conceptual framework and operational plan regarding international study as a component of teacher education programs as well as possibilities for study at sites within the United States that offer diverse environments.**

**Rationale:** Although there are certainly opportunities for international study in education that are offered to teacher education students, these efforts do not appear to be based on any common set of goals. They often happen as a result of faculty linkages with institutions in other parts of the world. Currently, the College has multiple student teaching sites that are available to students in elementary and secondary education. Almost all of these programs take place during the student teaching experience, and all are located in Europe. Many education majors do study abroad, but these study abroad experiences typically are not focused on the study of education. The CIRT program in C & I, which will begin next year, is an example of a program that has been purposefully designed to offer varied international study at different points in the degree program. It would be advantageous to the College to have a conceptual framework for international study that would address the general goals for such experiences and begin to establish some parameters for various types of experiences focused on the study of education.

### **Potential Strategies**

- Provide a clear set of goals that international study would help to achieve for teacher education students
- Consider establishing international experiences in education at points other than student teaching
- Consider establishing educational experiences within the United States at settings that offer particular types of diversity that are not immediately available in the geographic area surrounding Penn State campuses.
- Consider establishing international experiences in parts of the world, other than Europe
- Consider taking advantage of the connections that have already been established among the College and the Humphrey Fellows program
- Support faculty engagement in other countries as a way to build connections and linkages for study by teacher education students