

Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC)
Third-Party Testimony
National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity
(NACIQI)

Submitted by:
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I intend to focus my address on the strengths of the TEAC process, what the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education learned from the process, and our experience working with two different accreditation agencies. I appreciate this opportunity to present to you this morning.

The University of Virginia offers a 5-year dual degree program leading to a Bachelor of Arts degree from the College of Arts and Sciences and a Master of Teaching Degree from the Curry School of Education as well as licensure and endorsement from the Commonwealth of Virginia. In addition, we offer a two-year postgraduate Master of Teaching Degree. Our program is unique among the nation's schools/colleges/departments of education in that we were the first to be fully accredited by the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC). Our TEAC accreditation covered elementary education, special education, and all areas of secondary education. In addition, we are the only institution with accreditation from both TEAC and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Our most recent accreditation status from these two agencies was received during the 1999-2000 academic year.

TEAC's policy's and procedures are comprehensive, logically developed, practical to implement, and supportive of educational enhancement and professional reform. TEAC's strength lies in the recognition that state licensing boards and large professional organizations set standards for the professional development of teachers and that schools/colleges of education are professionally and ethically obligated to meet these standards. In fact, states in which teacher education program approval procedures are in place, such as those in the Commonwealth of

Virginia, establish rigorous standards based on those set by the professional associations in each licensure area. As an approved program of the Commonwealth, the University of Virginia must meet these standards in order to have our students licensed by the state agency. For instance, in my own professional field of special education we have based our teacher preparation program both on the state mandated competencies and the standards established by the Council for Exceptional Children. I have presided over many meetings in which faculty refer to their own professional organization standards to guide our decisions. While holding firm to the importance of professional standards and the insistence that evidence be given to the demonstration of these standards, TEAC allows for each institution to determine its own standards selection and implementation course.

Once accepted a set of standards it had to demonstrate how the standards are achieved and the impact that the standards have on the school's graduates and the pupils they teach. All evidence of achievement must be performance-based adhering to the rigors of a research agenda. The result of TEAC's intended flexibility within a prescribed structure is that the teacher preparation program must dig deep within itself to prove that its philosophy and implementation practices lead to effective preparation of qualified teachers.

In the Curry School of Education's case, we used an array of evidence that included but was not limited to: a comparison of our students' academic achievement with those of other UVA students in the College of Arts and Sciences; a recognition of the research base underpinning our most prominent education classes and experiences; and assessment on the growth of our students skills across years in the program. Repeatedly, we were able to demonstrate that our students were equal to or more competent in content knowledge than non-education Arts and Sciences students enrolled in the same A & S majors. We established conversations among faculty that lead to a curriculum analysis and refinement process leading to a greater focus on research validated pedagogy. Analysis of clinical practice evaluations and development of numerous scatter-grams resulted in an understanding of student characteristics that may result in clinical performance difficulties.

Although the Curry School of Education had been professionally accredited by NCATE since 1960, we had never been forced to examine our own philosophy, policies, or structures in such a meaningful way. In the

past, such accreditation was achieved through a collection of artifacts and a series of writing tasks demonstrating that we fit the requirements. There was no real need on the part of the Teacher Education Program to attempt a thorough institutional self-analysis of practices, claims, and outcomes. TEAC, on the other hand, forced us to look at our program in a way that drove us to understand its very structure and to face our own shortcomings.

In putting together the TEAC required *Quality Control System Chart* (that was submitted previously to the committee), we began to recognize that the presumed structures may be in place but several were not functioning as well as intended. For instance, the links and relationships among the various Teacher Education related committees existed more on paper than in real practice. Our ties to The College of Arts & Sciences were minimal although the dual degree program had been in place for over a decade. Our then developing student performance portfolio had little alignment to the skill and knowledge areas we said the program was based on from the beginning, and our follow-up of graduates added nothing to our curriculum refinement. Recognition of these weaknesses was the start of our “Institutional Learning”, as TEAC calls it, that has led to some very clear and direct changes in the past few years.

Today, The Curry School of Education has better and more consistent relations with the College of Arts and Sciences led by top level administrators in both schools. The Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences is leading the way among his faculty in examining the liberal arts content needs of an elementary education teacher. In addition, the two schools are currently in the process of developing common faculty positions and roles to support the needs of teacher education students in their joint degree program. The Curry School of Education has also in the past two years developed and piloted a new on-line evaluation and portfolio system that is fully aligned and integrated with courses and experiences throughout the teacher preparation program. We are now in a process of connecting with and learning from our graduates in order to further refine our program offerings to the realities of today’s classrooms.

The depth of our understanding of our impact on our students and graduates is just beginning and much of this began with the infusion of practices from the TEAC process. For an institution accreditation is a very hard and intensive process that goes beyond actual program implementation and forces the program to deal with issues concerning time, man-power, and

allocated expenses to assess the impact of the process on their practices. What might be referred to as a “benefit analysis” is an equation of costs against results in self-knowledge and programmatic change. The TEAC process requires that the institution develop and consistently implement policies and procedures that demonstrate program effectiveness relative to the institution’s claims. The process is one that is relevant and is a matter of documenting and clearly articulating what we as a teacher preparation program are actually doing. Materials remain within context and during the audit we were asked to produce the required documentation only when it was needed for clarification and support of a statement or claim in either the Inquiry Brief or on the Quality Control Chart. This effectively reduced the man-hours for accreditation preparation and the expense of reproducing, organizing and highlighting such documentation as was needed in NCATE. TEAC relies on the objective review of 2 auditors over 1.5 days (rather than a full team of NCATE and state participants that can total 9-10 interacting with groups of faculty over a 4.5 day period). Thereby reducing costs and management details further. The interesting thing is that the audit was much more intense and meaningful than any of the multiple sessions held during the NCATE visit. The audit probes lead the Curry School to go deeper into our own self-analysis. This is a significant difference for faculty who are committed to their responsibilities of working directly with future teachers.

In addition, TEAC’s reliance on established standards as selected by the Teacher Preparation program means that we did not have to create volumes of folios for each professional association (which in the case of the Curry School of Education would have meant 9 different documents of 100-400 pages each) using different formats and abiding by different interpretations of the NCATE policies. Again, time, money, and faculty resources were reduced without any loss to program effectiveness or to the accreditation process. Repeatedly, in a time of fiscal difficulties, reduced faculty, and increasing numbers of students in our Teacher Preparation Program, we realized the TEAC process focused on a direct audit procedure resulted in an effective self-analysis, a relevant external review of our claims, adherence to professional standards, and assistance in defining our future direction.

In the future, the University of Virginia’s Curry School of Education will consider multiple factors in deciding about accreditation. Whatever we do will be done with full recognition that TEAC served us well and that our

program has moved forward in a positive direction as a result of having gone through the TEAC audit and review.

I will be glad to answer any questions related to the University of Virginia's participation in the TEAC process. Thank you for you attention.